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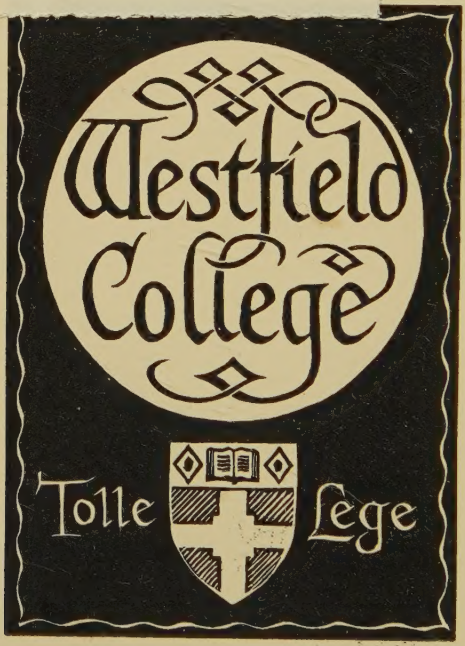

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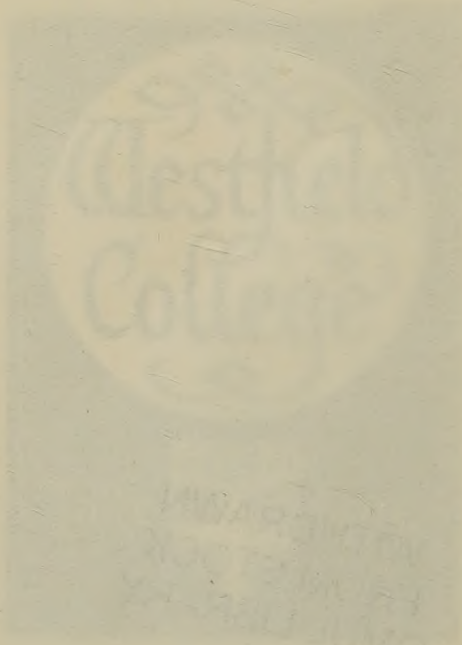
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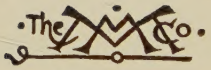
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MRS. DANE'S DEFENCE

31146
25.11.47

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
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PERSONS REPRESENTED.

Sir Daniel (Mr. Justice) Carteret.

Lionel Carteret, his adopted son.

Canon Bonsey, vicar of Sunningwater.

Mr. Bulsom-Porter.

Mr. James Risby.

Mr. Fendick, a private inquiry agent.

Adams, butler at Lady Eastney's.

Wilson, butler at Sir Daniel's.

Mrs. Dane.

Mrs. Bulsom-Porter.

Janet Colquhoun, niece to Lady Eastney.

Lady Eastney.

The whole of the action takes place at Sunningwater, about twenty-five miles from London, in the present day.

ACT I.

SCENE—The Blue Drawing-Room at Lady Eastney's. Night.

ACT II.

SCENE—The Same on an Afternoon Two or Three Weeks Later.

ACT III.

SCENE—Library at Sir Daniel's on the Following Wednesday Afternoon.

ACT IV.

SCENE—The Same, on the following Saturday Evening.

The following is a copy of the playbill of the first performance of Mrs. Dane's Defence at Wyndham's Theater, London:

On Tuesday, October 9th, 1900, at 8.15,
and following evenings at 8.30,
Will be presented an Original Play, in Four Acts, entitled,

MRS. DANE'S DEFENCE.

By Henry Arthur Jones.

Sir Daniel (Mr. Justice) Carteret	Mr. Charles Wyndham
Lionel Carteret (his adopted Son)	Mr. Alfred Kendrick
Canon Bonsey	Mr. Alfred Bishop
Mr. Bulsom-Porter	Mr. E. W. Garden
Mr. James Risby	Mr. Charles Thursby
Fendick (a private Inquiry Agent)	Mr. Stanley Pringle
Adams (Butler to Lady Eastney)	Mr. Reginald Walter
Wilson (Butler to Sir Daniel)	Mr. Charles Terric
Mrs. Dane	Miss Lena Ashwell
Mrs. Bulsom-Porter . . .	Miss Marie Illington
Janet Colquhoun	Miss Beatrice Irwin
Lady Eastney	Miss Mary Moore

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY

ACT I

Scene the blue drawing-room at Lady Eastney's—night.

ACT II

Scene, the same on Saturday afternoon nearly three weeks later.

ACT III

Scene, the library at Sir Daniel's on the following Wednesday afternoon.

ACT IV

Scene, the same on the following Saturday evening.

The action takes place at Sunningwater about twenty-five miles from London.

Time—The Present.

ACT I

Scene—The Blue Drawing-room at Lady Eastney's, Sunningwater. A very brightly-furnished room in a country house about twenty miles from London. A conservatory all along stage at back, entered by doors. French windows, right, opening upon veranda and lawn. Door up stage, left, leading into large drawing-room. This door opens off and is partly covered with a curtain. When it is open, a buzz of conversation as from a reception is heard. Fireplace down stage, left. Time: after dinner on a night in July. The doors are all open. A violin is played off left, as if it were two rooms away. Mrs. Bulsom-Porter, a lady of forty-five, enters left, showing great irritation. She seats herself, right, on sofa, and fans herself. A moment or two later, Mr. Bulsom-Porter enters by the same door. He is a flabby, affable, easy-going English gentleman about fifty. He looks round cautiously to see that he is not followed, then closes the door softly and comes up to his wife.

Bulsom-Porter. (*A quiet, drawling, good-humoured utterance.*) It's a mystery to me, Henrietta, that we can't arrange to celebrate these little domestic battles on our own domestic hearth.

Mrs. Bul.-P. I warn you that if you continue

to pay such marked attention to that woman, I shall tell the whole neighbourhood her history.

BUL.-P. You will please hold your tongue about Mrs. Dane. Jim says that he is mistaken, and that she is not the lady he knew in Vienna.

MRS. BUL.-P. He is only saying that to shelter her. The fact is, she is leading Jim by the nose, the same as she is leading you and young Carteret; and it only remains to be seen which of the three will be her victim.

BUL.-P. Well, I trust I shall be the lucky fellow, but I'm afraid the odds are on Lionel Carteret, and I shall come in a bad third.

MRS. BUL.-P. At least you might have the good taste to try and hide your infidelities!

BUL.-P. My dear, you may depend, when I have any, I shall. Now, suppose we get back to the others?

MRS. BUL.-P. You wish to get back to that woman?

BUL.-P. I wish to get back to Lady Eastney and the other guests.

MRS. BUL.-P. You admire this Mrs. Dane?

BUL.-P. (*cordially, going off left*), Very much indeed.

MRS. BUL.-P. (*stopping him*). Why do you admire her?

BUL.-P. Because she has a pretty face, a soft voice, and a charming manner.

MRS. BUL.-P. Of course! Mere physical charms! What horribly disgusting minds men must have!

BUL.-P. We have! Give us up! Wash your hands of us, and let us go our own wicked ways. (*Going.*)

MRS. BUL.-P. (*still stopping him*). To what extent do you admire her?

BUL.-P. To the extent of very much preferring her company to yours when you're in one of these unreasonable jealous fits. Now, will you oblige me by returning to the drawing-room?

(*He opens the door, left. Enter by it* MR. JAMES RISBY, *an ordinary Englishman about thirty-five.*)

MRS. BUL.-P. I shall not speak to that woman——

BUL.-P. Hush!

(*Closes door sharply after* RISBY.)

RISBY. My dear aunt, I'm leaving for Paris to-morrow morning, and before I go I want to put you right on a little matter.

MRS. BUL.-P. You mean Mrs. Dane?

RISBY. Exactly. When I first saw her at Sir Daniel Carteret's a fortnight ago, I thought I recognized her——

MRS. BUL.-P. You did recognize her.

RISBY. I was mistaken.

MRS. BUL.-P. You told me she was the Miss Hindemarsh who was connected with a disgraceful scandal in Vienna five years ago. I particularly watched your manner, and I'm sure you were speaking the truth.

RISBY. I was speaking the truth—as I supposed. And therefore my manner carried conviction. But I am now speaking the truth when I tell you I was mistaken. I trust my manner carries equal conviction.

(*Looking at her very fixedly.*)

MRS. BUL.-P. (*Looks at him very fixedly for a few moments.*) No, Jim; I do not and cannot believe you.

RISBY. I'm sorry. However, the fact remains, my dear aunt, that I have inadvertently injured a very charming woman——

MRS. BUL.-P. Of course! A very charming woman! That's the reason you withdraw your accusation.

RISBY. I made no accusation. And if you have repeated what I told you in the strictest confidence about Mrs. Dane, I must beg you to put the matter right at once. For if you give me as your authority I shall have to explain that I was mistaken, that consequently you were mistaken, and further, that from this moment, you are fully aware that you are mistaken.

MRS. BUL.-P. I'm not fully aware that I'm mistaken.

BUL.-P. What does it matter whether you're mistaken or no? Suppose Mrs. Dane is Miss Hindemarsh, what then?

MRS. BUL.-P. What then? Do you consider her fit to mix in the society of your wife?

BUL.-P. I daresay she's as fit as nine out of ten of the women you meet if the truth were only known. (*To* RISBY.) What was the exact story of this Miss Hindemarsh?

RISBY. Oh, the eternal trio! *Dramatis personæ,* Mr. Horace Trent, charming, devoted, middle-aged husband; Mrs. Horace Trent, charming, devoted, middle-aged wife; Felicia Hindemarsh, charming, devoted, youthful governess to their children and companion to Mrs. Trent; the whole forming a truly happy family, who passed the autumn at the Italian lakes, and returned by Vienna at the time I was an attaché there five years ago. During their stay in Vienna, charming, middle-aged wife discovers a *liaison* between charming, middle-aged husband and charming, youthful governess; and instead of sensibly packing off missy with a month's salary and saying no more about it, charming, middle-aged wife, being a neurotic creature, commits suicide. Charming, middle-aged husband is naturally horrified, and also refrains from doing the sensible thing—in

fact, goes out of his mind, and is at present in an asylum in the north of England. Missy does the sensible thing and disappears. The story is hushed up as far as possible, but the moral remains: "Upon the verge of such a tragedy may any one of us poor innocents be treading at this moment." (*Takes out watch.*) Adieu, auntie. I have to catch an early train to town to-morrow morning.

MRS. BUL.-P. You are sure Mrs. Dane is not Miss Hindemarsh?

RISBY. Quite sure.

(*The violin ceases and there is some applause.*)

MRS. BUL.-P. She doesn't resemble Miss Hindemarsh?

RISBY (*after a pause*). There is a slight resemblance. Perhaps I should say a considerable resemblance.

MRS. BUL.-P. (*after looking at him fixedly for a moment*). Jim, I shall fully inquire into this Mrs. Dane's antecedents——

BUL.-P. What for? What business is it of yours to rake up old scandals? It's five years ago, and——

Enter, left, MRS. DANE, *a pretty, soft-voiced, dark little woman about twenty-eight. They show some embarrassment at her entrance. With*

some little hesitation MRS. DANE *comes up to* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER.

MRS. D. Lady Eastney has a great find in her new violinist, don't you think?

MRS. BUL.-P. (*coldly*). Really, I didn't hear her. (*Going left.*) Ah, I see she is going to play again. Alfred (*to* BULSOM-PORTER) I very much want you to hear this. (*Goes off, turning, comes back a step.*) Alfred, come and listen. I want to decide whether we shall engage this lady for our garden party.

(*She waits at door, left, till he comes up, then goes off.* BULSOM-PORTER *follows reluctantly, exchanging a little shrug and grin with* RISBY. *After they have gone off there is a little pause. The violin begins again and the buzz of conversation in the next room ceases.* RISBY *goes to door, left, closes it.* MRS. DANE *has been watching him a little furtively. Having closed the door he comes up to her.*)

RISBY. My dear Mrs. Dane, when one has inadvertently made a mistake, the best way is to own up at once.

MRS. D. Yes? Who has made a mistake?

RISBY. I have—a stupid, ill-natured, idiotic mistake. You remember when I first met you?

MRS. D. (*glances at him very quickly*). At Sir Daniel Carteret's, a fortnight ago.

RISBY (*after a slight pause*). Yes. Do you know I thought then that we had met before?

MRS. D. Indeed? Where?

RISBY. In Vienna five years ago.

MRS. D. I have never been in Vienna.

RISBY. No. The second time I saw you I was convinced I was mistaken. But in the meantime—I scarcely know how to confess my folly—I had thoughtlessly told my aunt, Mrs. Bulsom-Porter, that I recognized you.

MRS. D. I've noticed that Mrs. Bulsom-Porter seems to avoid me. You must have told her I was some very wicked person. Whom does she suppose me to be?

RISBY. You have some resemblance to a Miss Felicia Hindemarsh——

MRS. D. Who is she?

RISBY. She was connected with an unfortunate affair in Vienna five years ago. (*Pause.*)

MRS. D. And does Mrs. Bulsom-Porter really think I am this—this Miss what's-her-name?

RISBY. I have assured her you are not.

MRS. D. Thank you. What would you advise me to do?

RISBY. I am obliged to leave for Paris to-morrow morning on my way to Switzerland. If you find yourself in any difficulty, write to me and I will reply in such a way that there can be no doubt.

MRS. D. Thank you. You're very good.

RISBY. Not at all. I can't tell you how vexed I am to have made such a horrible mistake. But having made it, I thought it better to put you on your guard. Good-bye. (*Offering hand.*)

MRS. D. Good-bye.

(*He goes a few steps; then returns.*)

RISBY. Mrs. Dane, if you think of passing the winter away from Sunningwater, I have the most delightful little villa near Mentone—untenanted—I should be pleased to place it at your disposal.

MRS. D. No, thank you. Why should I leave Sunningwater?

RISBY. Is there anything I can do for you before I start?

MRS. D. Will you tell Sir Daniel and Mr. Carteret that I am not this lady?

RISBY (*after a moment or two's deliberation.*) Believe me, it will be better to let the matter drop entirely, unless it is raised by others. (*He goes to door left, opens it, looks off.*) Lady Eastney is busy. I'll slip round by the conservatory and send her a little note of adieu. Again, good-bye.

MRS. D. Good-bye. I may always reckon you my friend?

RISBY. (*Shakes her hand warmly.*) Rely on me.

(*Exit by conservatory. She watches him off; then in anxious deliberation walks up and down the room for a few moments.*)

Enter, left, LIONEL CARTERET, *a fresh, bright, enthusiastic, clear-complexioned English lad of twenty-four. He closes the door after him.*

LAL. Mrs. Dane, if I ask you a question will you answer me truthfully instead of telling me a polite fib?

MRS. D. (*after showing a little alarm*). Ask me the question.

LAL. You seem to be keeping out of my way, trying not to give me a chance of speaking to you alone. (*She shows delight when she sees his drift.*) And the other night at our place you were so different; you seemed to like my company. Have I offended you?

MRS. D. No.

LAL. Then why have you changed? For you have changed.

MRS. D. Perhaps I was a little foolish last Wednesday.

LAL. No! no! You don't know what I felt that night! I waited outside your window till past midnight, then I tramped about the country till three, then the birds began to wake and sing and I whistled back their songs to them; then I went down to the river and had a swim; then I came back to the house and plundered the larder and ate up everything in it; then I went to the stables and saddled Moon Daisy, and galloped her all round the park; then I came back and had another breakfast, and then I kept just mad with happiness all the rest of the day!

MRS. D. (*She has listened with great delight, keeping her face away from him.*) I see I was very foolish.

LAL. No. Why?

MRS. D. Believe me, a friendship between us wouldn't be for your good.

LAL. It isn't friendship I want.

MRS. D. (*Delighted.*) What else can it be? You're twenty-four. I'm twenty-seven. That means many years between us, and there will be more as we grow older.

LAL (*shaking his head*). You will always be the same age that I am—the very same day, the very same hour.

MRS. D. (*She smiles and shakes her head.*) But you know nothing of me?

LAL. I know you as you know yourself.

MRS. D. (*a little cautiously*). Do you? How?

LAL. My heart has told me all.

MRS. D. Perhaps your heart has spoken falsely.

LAL. You shan't persuade me that you aren't exactly what I want you to be.

MRS. D. (*Shows great delight.*) Perhaps my best self isn't very far from that. But then we have so many different selves, haven't we?

LAL. You have but your own self, and that is the one I know.

MRS. D. Then that is the particular self you must always believe me to be. It will do no harm when we are parted.

LAL. Parted?

MRS. D. Did you notice Sir Daniel looking at us down the table at dinner? He was thinking, "I must get Lionel away from Mrs. Dane." And he has made up his mind to do it.

LAL. He won't wish to part us when he knows how much I love you.

MRS. D. You haven't told him?

LAL. No. The truth is, a year ago I thought I was in love with Miss Colquhoun. But Lady Eastney and my father said she was too young.

MRS. D. So it was broken off?

LAL. We were to wait a year, and then if we were both of the same mind, we were to be formally engaged.

MRS. D. And is Miss Colquhoun of the same mind?

LAL. Janet? I don't know. I only know it would be a sin to be engaged to her while I love you as I do.

MRS. D. I'm afraid of Sir Daniel.

LAL. Why?

MRS. D. I suppose his reputation frightens me.

LAL. They say he's the pleasantest judge that ever hanged a man.

MRS. D. Mr. Risby was telling us about some famous cross-examination—something about a forger.

LAL. Oh, Kettleby, the forger-murderer. On the morning of his execution Kettleby said that to have heard my father's cross-examination of his witnesses was very well worth being hanged for.

MRS. D. Then do you wonder I'm rather afraid of Sir Daniel?

LAL. You needn't be. In private he's the dearest, kindest-hearted man. And when he knows that the happiness of my whole life depends upon you, I'm sure he won't withhold his consent.

MRS. D. He isn't your own father?

LAL. No, but if he were I couldn't love him more than I do.

MRS. D. But if he doesn't think me suitable; if after consideration he says "No"?

LAL. Then I'll marry you and disobey him.

MRS. D. Are you sure of yourself?

LAL. Try me.

MRS. D. (*after some consideration*). No. I'm very proud and happy to be loved as you love me. But I won't come between you and your father.

LAL. But if I can get his consent?

Enter, left, SIR DANIEL (MR. JUSTICE) CARTERET, *about fifty-five. A pause of embarrassment.* SIR DANIEL *is sauntering off at back.*

MRS. D. We are missing all the music——

SIR D. (*Turns.*) It's worth hearing. Mademoiselle Lemonier is just going to play.

MRS. D. Thank you. I want to hear her—— (*Exit* MRS. DANE, *left.* LAL *is following her.*)

SIR D. Lal! (LAL *stops.* SIR DANIEL *closes the door, left. Piano faintly heard through following scene.*) I've spoken to Sir Robert Jennings to take you out as assistant to him on this new Egyptian railway.

LAL. I'd rather not leave England just now, sir.

SIR D. (*very firmly*). I wish it.

LAL. Why, sir?

SIR D. (*very affectionately putting his hand on* LAL'S *shoulder*). My dear boy, to stop you from making an unhappy fool of yourself.

LAL. In what way, sir?

SIR D. When I came up to London to read for the bar, I fell very desperately in love with my landlady's sister, a lady some six years older and some two stone heavier than myself. She was in the mantle business and wore a large crinoline. I used to call her my Bonnie Louisa. My father got wind of it, came up to town and promptly shattered our applecart; sent Bonnie Louisa flying to Paris, and packed me off on a judicial commission to India.

LAL. I don't see the point of the story, sir.

SIR D. Twelve years after, I happened to be coming down the Edgware Road on a Sunday morning, and I met Bonnie Louisa with a husband and five children, sailing along the pavement, all in their Sunday best.

LAL. Still, I don't see the point, sir.

SIR D. I did! I hurried to church and devoutly thanked Heaven that my father had had the sense and courage to do for me what I'm trying to do for you to-night. (*Very firmly.*) Now my boy, you'll take this post under Sir Robert Jennings.

LAL. I can't leave her, sir. I love her so much.

SIR D. But a year ago you loved Janet Colquhoun.

LAL. I *thought* I loved Janet. I'm *sure* I love Mrs. Dane.

SIR D. My dear Lal, in a year you'll be sure you love somebody else, and you'll think you loved Mrs. Dane. (LAL *shakes his head.* SIR DANIEL *shakes his more vigorously still.*) Yes, yes, my boy. Bonnie Louisa, Janet Colquhoun, Juliet Capulet—the divine illusion is always the same—and it always ends unhappily.

LAL. It always ends unhappily?

SIR D. Or in bathos, which is far worse. Rather than that, let us be thankful when the red-hot plough-share is driven right through our hearts, or when we have the pluck to drive it through ourselves. Now, Lal, I want you to leave England at once.

LAL. I'm very sorry. I can't, unless—unless Mrs. Dane goes with me. (SIR DANIEL *looks astonished and indignant.*) I've asked her to be my wife. (SIR DANIEL *stands perplexed, hurt.*)

SIR D. You might have told me first, Lal.

LAL. Forgive me, sir. I meant to, but my heart was so full, and the words slipped out. You're angry with me?

SIR D. (*very kindly*). No, my boy. (*Pause.*) Has she accepted you?

LAL. She will—if you consent.

SIR D. How long have you cared for her?

LAL. From the very first day I met her.

SIR D. Two months ago. Has she told you anything of her people?

LAL. No.

SIR D. Circumstances? position?

LAL. No.

SIR D. Where she has lived all her life?

LAL. She happened to say that she had spent some years in Canada.

SIR D. Come, that's something. There was a Mr. Dane—who was he?

LAL. I don't know.

SIR D. Hasn't she mentioned him?

LAL. Naturally not.

SIR D. Naturally not. Still there was a Mr. Dane, and he remains a factor in the situation. Has she told you her age?

LAL. Twenty-seven.

SIR D. Twenty-seven? I should have said a year or so older.

LAL. She wouldn't tell me a lie.

SIR D. No?

LAL. A woman doesn't tell a lie to the man she loves. Why do you smile?

SIR D. My dear Lal, fifty women out of a hundred have no notion of what truth means, and don't bother about it. The other fifty have the rudiments of a truth-sense in various stages of development, and will generally tell the truth where their own interests don't clash. But in matters of love, there isn't one woman in a hundred—there isn't one woman in a thousand, that,

when she's put to it, won't lie right and left, up and down, backwards and forwards, *to* the man she loves, *for* the man she loves, *with* the man she loves, *about* the man she loves, to gain her ends, and *keep* the man she loves.

LAL. You have a very low opinion of women, sir.

SIR D. I have a very high opinion of them—in matters of strategy.

LAL. You won't stand in my way, sir? Think, sir, has there never been a time in your life when you would have thrown up everything, just for the right of calling one woman your own?

SIR D. (*is moved by his appeal; takes the hand he is holding out; shakes it warmly.*) I won't stand in your way, Lal.

LAL. Thank you, sir. You've always been better than a dozen fathers to me.

SIR D. I won't stand in your way—unless there's some good reason why you shouldn't marry her.

LAL. What reason can there be? You don't know anything against her?

SIR D. No. Still it's a little strange that she has lived in Sunningwater some months and nobody seems to know anything about her. Have you said anything to Janet?

LAL. No. I thought it better to let her guess

—from my manner. You know, sir, there was no engagement between us.

SIR D. I'm sorry. I hope this business won't twist poor little Janet's heartstrings.

Enter, left, LADY EASTNEY, *about thirty, bright, fashionable, handsomely dressed.* LAL *goes up to back.*

LADY E. Sir Daniel! Playing truant here! Everybody will be putting the worst interpretation upon it.

SIR D. What interpretation?

LADY E. That I've accepted you at last, and that you've come in here to repent and think of the best way of getting out of it. (*Calls to* LAL.) Lionel! (*He comes down.*) The young people are getting up a dance! Look! Janet is posing against that pillar in an attitude of maiden-meditation fancy-free. Go and ask her to dance with you.

LAL (*confused*). I'm very sorry, Lady Eastney—will you tell her, sir? And will you tell Miss Colquhoun?

(*Exit hurriedly, right.* LADY EASTNEY *looks at* SIR DANIEL *for an explanation.*)

SIR D. It seems that Lal didn't know his own mind last year.

LADY E. He s going to throw over my Janet for Mrs. Dane?

SIR D. I'm very sorry (*looking left*). Here's Janet coming to look for him. I think you should tell her.

LADY E. Help me.

Enter JANET COLQUHOUN, *about eighteen, with a slight Scotch accent, she saunters towards right.*

LADY E. Aren't you going to dance, Janet?

JANET. I'm thinking I won't to-night.

LADY E. But what are all the young men doing? Hasn't anybody asked you?

JANET. Oh, I'm not standing out for want of partners, but I thought there were plenty of them in there to tumble over each other, so I'd just get a breath of cool air outside.

(*Going right.* LAL CARTERET *passes outside and takes no notice of her. She flushes up, shows for a moment that she is very much hurt, then conquers her feelings, and with great effort controls herself during the remainder of the scene.*)

LADY E. Janet darling, go and have a dance, and don't think anything more about him.

JANET. Him?! Him?! Which him? (*Pointing off to where* LIONEL CARTERET *has just gone*

by. Very contemptuously.) *That* him? Oh, there are plenty of other "hims" in the world, and I'll have a good conceit of myself and not trouble about any of them.

LADY E. (*very tenderly*). Then you've forgotten all about your little flirtation a year ago?

JANET. Flirtation?

LADY E. With Mr. Carteret.

JANET. A year's a long time, isn't it? (*To* SIR DANIEL.) I suppose Mr. Carteret has forgotten all about it too. Has he?

SIR D. I'm afraid Lal is very much like many other young men.

JANET. You mean he makes love to every girl he meets, and then breaks his word to all of them?

SIR D. No! No! But perhaps he was a little too hasty a year ago.

JANET. Is there any harm done?

SIR D. Not unless you have taken it too seriously.

JANET. Didn't he wish me to take it seriously?

SIR D. He did at the time.

JANET. But now he doesn't?

SIR D. He's grieving to think that he has caused you pain.

JANET. Poor fellow! Poor fellow! Do call him in and tell him that I'll try and not break my heart over him. (LAL *passes the door of veranda.*) Mr. Carteret. (LAL *enters, right.*) Sir

Daniel and auntie have just reminded me that we were very foolish a year ago. I've seen so little of you lately that I'd forgotten all about it. Perhaps you've been grieving about it——

LAL. Janet!

JANET. Ah, you have! You won't take it too much to heart if I ask you not to think anything more of our—our flirtation? I was only seventeen. At seventeen one may change one's mind. I've changed my mind, Mr. Carteret.

LAL. If I've caused you any pain you'll forgive me?

JANET. Forgive you?! And I thought you'd be just breaking your heart for me! Aren't you breaking your heart?

LAL. Miss Colquhoun, I know I've behaved badly.

JANET (*mocking a Scotch peasant's dialect*). Dinna fash yourself. Ye're a braw laddie, but I'll just mak up my mind to do without ye. (*A little contemptuous curtsey to him.*) Now! Will you dance with me just once for auld lang syne, and then I'll not trifle with your feelings any longer, Mr. Carteret?

LAL. If you wish. (*Gives her his arm. Exeunt, left.*)

LADY E. I'm very angry with Lionel.

SIR D. Why?

LADY E. For not seeing where his happiness lies, after I'd planned it out so carefully for him.

SIR D. Is there any knowing where married happiness lies for other people, or even for ourselves?

LADY E. Apparently not. The happiest marriage I've ever known was between my old governess of forty-six, and a young piano-tuner of twenty-two. We all went down on our knees, and begged her to see the monstrous unsuitability of it; but she wouldn't! She would marry the man, and the result is she has lived happily every afterwards!

SIR D. Give me your advice. Lal wants to marry this Mrs. Dane——

LADY E. I can't quite forgive her for taking him away from Janet, and I can't quite forgive Lionel.

SIR D. Don't be hard on him. Help me to do the best for the boy. I don't want him to make a mess of his life as I've done of mine.

LADY E. Have you made a mess of your life?

SIR D. Yes, so far as women are concerned.

LADY E. H'm. (*Looks at him very critically.*) You seem to have thrived very well on it. It can't have been a very unpleasant process. I wonder how many poor women have been sacrificed in the —scrimmage?

SIR D. None, I hope. At least—(*deep sigh*)

I've had one great love story. Shall I tell you about it?

LADY E. I should love to hear, if it isn't too sad and too sacred.

SIR D. I've never told this to anyone. I wouldn't tell it to you except—except that you know I would gladly give you the right to ask me for some knowledge of my past attachments.

LADY E. I have already the right to ask you, the right of friendship, and the right of a woman's curiosity. (*Goes to door, left, looks off.*) I think I can leave them for five minutes, and I've really done my duty to them to-night. (*Closes door, left.*) Now, begin! Don't spare yourself. Don't shock me; and skip nothing of vital interest.

SIR D. We'll skip the first thirty-five years of my life.

LADY E. Were they all barren of love stories?

SIR D. None of them, after fifteen. But what's a boy's love?

LADY E. That's what poor Janet is thinking.

SIR D. When I was just getting into comfortable practice I was thrown very much into the company of the wife of one of my clients. We grew to love each other deeply, passionately, almost before we were aware of it. We owned our love, recognized its hopelessness, and resolved to part. We parted, and endured some months of banishment worse than death; then we met again,

and after a few mad weeks we determined to make our own happiness in our own world. She arranged to leave her home and to meet me at Liverpool by a certain train. I had our passages taken, and I remember waiting for her, waiting, waiting, waiting. She never came. I went back to town and found a letter from her. Her boy, her only child, was dangerously ill and she had stayed to nurse him. She was a deeply religious woman, though she loved me, and she had vowed to God that if her child's life was spared she would never see me again. I was heart-broken, but I sent her a message that she had done right. The boy's life was spared. I never saw her again. In a few months she was dead. I had a big bout or two of dissipation, then I pulled myself together and worked hammer and tongs, day and night, at my profession. I became successful, and met other women; had my affairs with them—I won't call them love-affairs—some of them graceful, some of them romantic, none of them quite degrading, but all of them empty and heartless. And so I frittered away what affections I had left in cheap and facile amours; and all the while her tender ghost was standing beside me, whispering, "This isn't love! This isn't love! You'll never love again as you loved me!" I've been successful and happy after a fashion; but there has never been a moment since I lost her when I wouldn't

have cheerfully bartered every farthing, every honour, every triumph I've scored in my profession, to stand again on that platform at Liverpool and know that she was coming to me.

LADY E. My poor friend!

SIR D. Her husband died, rather badly off, fifteen years ago. I took the boy, gave him my name, and made him my own. I've been a better man for having him, and I love him—I've never allowed Lal to see how much I love him—I don't think I quite know myself, but the boy is very dear to me, very, very dear.

LADY E. I should like to have been that woman. You've made me very jealous of her.

SIR D. Why?

LADY E. We all long to be the object of an undying love, and it so seldom comes off.

SIR D. Curious I should be telling you all this, and at the same time asking you to be my wife.

LADY E. My dear friend, I've never been so near accepting you as I am at this moment.

SIR D. Will you?

LADY E. Now, if you had that same love to offer me——

SIR D. I haven't, and I care for you too much to deceive you. But I can give you a very genuine attachment, and perfect fidelity. If I were to pretend to offer you more I should be wronging you. Well?

LADY E. Will you keep the offer open?

SIR D. As long as you please.

LADY E. You shouldn't say that. You should make me fear I'm going to lose you if I don't say "Yes" this moment.

SIR D. I'm past fifty. You're not thirty. There's no chance of your losing me. Well?

LADY E. We'll let the matter stay over again, if you don't mind?

SIR D. I can wait. Meantime, you understand now why I want the boy to make a happy marriage. Will you help me?

LADY E. Yes, with all my heart. What have you done so far?

SIR D. Tried to laugh him out of it. When I found that was impossible I promised him he should marry her if we found she was suitable. What do you know of her?

LADY E. Nothing. I met her at the Canon's.

Enter, left, very cautiously, CANON BONSEY, *a rather jovial, good-natured clergyman about sixty; shrewd, plausible, worldly. He enters very cautiously, and closes the door behind him.*

CANON B. Dear Lady Eastney, may I intrude for one moment? (*He comes up rather slowly and mysteriously.*) Do you know, I'm rather afraid we are going to have another scandal?

LADY E. (*quickly*). I don't know anything about it, Canon. I won't know anything about it. And above all, I decline to give a certificate of injured innocence to any young person who misses her last train. Now (*inclining her ear to him*), gently breathe the name of the minx and her victim and do, please, keep me out of it this time.

CANON B. Dear Lady Eastney, you may rely I shall do my best to keep everybody out of it—especially myself. You haven't heard any whisper about one of your guests this evening?

LADY E. No—whom?

CANON B. Mrs. Dane.

(SIR DANIEL *and* LADY EASTNEY *exchange looks.*)

LADY E. What of her?

CANON B. Ask Mrs. Bulsom-Porter.

LADY E. Mrs. Bulsom-Porter! How is it that everything horrid in this neighbourhood radiates to and from that woman! What is she saying, and how does she know?

CANON B. It seems her nephew, Mr. Risby, told her that Mrs. Dane was connected with a very ugly scandal in Vienna some years ago.

LADY E. Where is Mr. Risby? Will you ask him to come to me?

Enter ADAMS, *left, with letter on tray which he brings to* LADY EASTNEY.

ADAMS. From Mr. Risby, my lady. He has just gone.

(LADY EASTNEY *takes letter, reads it. Exit* ADAMS.)

SIR D. You introduced Mrs. Dane to us all, Canon.

CANON B. Yes. She came to church. Of course I called on her. I found she played the piano divinely, and had been living in Winchester for some months, and knew some very nice people there whom I knew; and above all was a very delightful lady. And when a delightful lady comes to church, and subscribes regularly to all the parish charities, and has a perfect mastery of the piano, and is evidently a very dear sweet creature in every way, and a gentlewoman, I don't think it's the duty of a clergyman to ask her for references as if she were a housemaid, eh?

SIR D. (*to* LADY EASTNEY). Does Risby mention anything of this?

LADY E. (*who has been reading* RISBY'S *letter.*) No. He only sends me a word of adieu. He has gone to town to-night on his way to Switzerland.

SIR D. (*to* CANON). Then you have no knowledge of Mrs. Dane, whether she is a desirable acquaintance?

CANON B. A woman with such a face, and such a figure, and such a divine musician, cannot be an undesirable acquaintance. At the same

time, as she is to take a stall at the bazaar, and the duchess is to open it, I should like to get this little matter cleared up. Our dear duchess is not a latitudinarian in these matters. What had we better do?

SIR D. You are the clergyman of the parish, and responsible for her introduction here. Oughtn't you to call on her and get to know her history?

CANON B. My dear Sir Daniel, what would happen? If there is anything shady in her past life she would omit to mention it. With my easy, ingenuous nature I should be a mere baby in her hands. No, I think this is a case where your legal experience might be of service, eh?

SIR D. If she were in the witness-box it might; but she isn't.

CANON B. Or, as it is essentially a woman's question, and as she is your guest, Lady Eastney, perhaps you might venture gently—gently to——

LADY E. Invite a lady to dinner, and then ask her whether she is fit to mix with my guests?

CANON B. H'm! It's very awkward. What is to be done?

LAL *enters left door quickly. At the same moment* MRS. DANE *appears in conservatory, left, behind a shrub, and gently moves towards centre, apparently much engaged with the plants*

LAL (*quick, indignant*). Lady Eastney, Mrs. Bulsom-Porter is circulating a most malicious story about Mrs. Dane. I beg you to inquire into the matter. (*To* SIR DANIEL.) Sir, you will help us?

SIR D. (*in a hurried whisper*). Not here, not now. We mustn't have a scene here. Hush!

(*Pointing to* MRS. DANE *in conservatory. She comes to centre door, enters, and comes down to them.* CANON BONSEY *goes off quickly, door right.*)

SIR D. (*looking off, left*). Ah, Lal, there is Sir Robert. Now we can get a word with him about the railway.

LAL. But, sir——

SIR D. (*in a low tone, very peremptory, and taking* LAL'S *arm*). If you please, Lal. If you please. (*Takes* LAL *off, left.*)

LADY E. They are serving a little supper for the late guests. Won't you come and have some?

MRS. D. No, thank you. I'm a little faint. I'll stay here.

(*Sits.* LADY EASTNEY *goes to door, left, looks back, returns to* MRS. DANE.)

LADY E. Is anything the matter?

MRS. D. No! No! What should there be?

LADY E. (*with meaning*). Can I be of any service to you?

MRS. D. In what way? (*Pause—the two women look at each other.*) I'm only a little faint. Please don't wait.

LADY E. I'll send my maid to you. Let me know if there is anything further I can do.

(*Exit door left.* MRS. DANE *watches her off furtively, then, after a second or two, rises, creeps round at back to behind the curtain hanging over door, left, peeps through, watching, listening, with drawn, frightened face. Laughter, buzz and hum of conversation, strains of distant dance music.*)

CURTAIN

(*Nearly three weeks pass between Acts I and II.*)

ACT II

SCENE—The same. Afternoon. Discover JANET seated on sofa at fancy work. She throws down the work, bursts into tears, then dries them, goes up to looking-glass on wall, stands looking at herself.

JANET (*to herself in the glass.*) Ah, you poor coward! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? To be troubling about a man who has had the bad taste to throw you over? Have a better opinion of yourself, my poor Janet! There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it! And a better man than Lionel Carteret will come and take a fancy to your bonnie, bonnie face! So dry your eyes and bide a wee bit, my lassie.

Enter LADY EASTNEY. *She comes up to* JANET *and looks in her face.*

LADY E. Janet.

JANET (*faces her, picks up her work*). Auntie, I'm just sick of staying in England, and wasting

my life in such trumpery as this (*shaking her work ferociously*) so I'm going straight out to India!

LADY E. India?

JANET. The Indian women are fearfully demoralized and ignorant; they don't know how to treat their babies, and when the poor wee mites come into the world they just perish by the score, for the want of a sensible body to teach the mothers how to use them.

LADY E. My dear Janet, if Providence has neglected to endow the Indian women with the common instincts of maternity, I question if you're quite qualified to supply the deficiency.

JANET. Mrs. Patterson is organizing a mission to go there to doctor and civilize the poor creatures, so I'll just go out and help her to do for them.

LADY E. Janet, I knew you were fretting——

JANET. What will I be fretting about?

LADY E. Lionel Carteret.

JANET (*bursts into laughter*). Oh, my poor little Auntie (*kissing her*), I'd clean forgotten all about the man.

LADY E. Janet, tell me the truth——

JANET. The truth is, Auntie, that if Mr. Lionel Carteret were lying down there on the floor and begging me to pick him up, I wouldn't take the trouble to stoop down to him, or to any other manbody in the world! There!

Enter ADAMS, *left, announcing* SIR DANIEL *and* MR. LIONEL CARTERET. *Enter* SIR DANIEL *and* LAL. *Exit* ADAMS.

JANET. How-d'ye-do, Sir Daniel? How-d'ye-do, Mr. Carteret?

LAL (*confused*). How-d'ye-do?

(JANET *takes up her hat which is lying on the chair, goes off at back, swinging it with an affectation of carelessness.* LADY EASTNEY *has shaken hands with* SIR DANIEL *and* LAL.)

SIR D. Well, how do we stand now?

LADY E. The Bulsom-Porters are coming over to meet you, and I've asked the Canon to look in. They'll be here directly. (*Taking out watch.*)

SIR D. And then what are we to do?

LADY E. Talk it over.

SIR D. Don't you think there's been quite enough talking it over the last fortnight?

LADY E. We haven't had your assistance. Candidly, what is your opinion?

SIR D. I have none. I'm waiting for facts. Have you heard from Risby?

LADY E. Not a word.

SIR D. What did you say to him?

LADY E. I asked him to tell me in the strictest confidence all he knew about Mrs. Dane.

SIR D. And he hasn't replied?

LADY E. It's only five days ago that I wrote. Perhaps my letter hasn't reached him.

SIR D. Rather strange, isn't it?

LAL (*indignantly*). It's much more strange that everybody should be saying and believing the worst of an innocent woman without a shadow of proof.

SIR D. Without a shadow of proof that she is innocent.

LAL. I thought, sir, that English law assumed everybody to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty.

SIR D. I do not assume Mrs. Dane is guilty—or innocent. I only say I don't know.

LAL. Mrs. Dane has done exactly what an innocent woman naturally would do.

SIR D. Ah, pardon my inexperience, my dear Lal. What does an innocent woman naturally do?

LAL. She treats all slander with silent contempt. She knows her life will stand the test of inquiry, and therefore she doesn't stoop to answer calumny.

SIR D. Meantime everybody cuts her.

LAL. Lady Eastney, if you were in Mrs. Dane's place how would you have acted?

SIR D. Supposing you were innocent?

LADY E. (*after a little pause*). I think I should have acted exactly as Mrs. Dane has done.

SIR D. Supposing you were guilty?

LADY E. I don't know.

SIR D. If you were guilty don't you think you would try to act exactly in the same way? And whether you succeeded, would depend, not so much upon your guilt or your innocence, as upon your self-control, and how far you had cultivated the woman's gift for acting. Guilt is the natural and necessary mimic of innocence as hypocrisy is the natural and necessary mimic of virtue; and just as nature is always ready to lend a mimic-skin of protection to any beast or bird or insect that needs its shelter, so she is always ready to lend the sheepskin of innocence to any criminal that's clever enough to draw it over him.

LAL. Criminal! You are speaking, sir, of the lady whom I have asked to be my wife.

SIR D. Not at all. I am speaking generally. For all I know, Mrs. Dane is the most innocent and virtuous lady in the world.

LAL. But you don't believe she is?

SIR D. I have no means of judging. The lady knows that her reputation is being torn to rags. She doesn't put the matter in her lawyer's hands. She avoids, or seems to avoid, meeting me; she gives you a few very vague details of her past life, and then wraps herself in a mantle of injured innocence——

LAL. (*very indignantly*). Injured innocence! (*To* SIR DANIEL). I asked you for your help to

clear the woman who is dearer to me than my life from a lying slander, and you insinuate that she is a criminal and a hypocrite! (*Seizes his hat.*) I will never again ask you for the smallest favour as long as I live. I give you back your name, and I take my own to offer it to her. Good-day, Sir Daniel Carteret. (*Going off.*)

LADY E. Lionel! (*He doesn't stop.*) Lionel! (*He half stops.*) Lionel! (*He stops.*) You want Mrs. Dane's reputation to be cleared. Don't you think Sir Daniel is the best man in England to help you? For her sake don't quarrel with him. Don't throw over the best of fathers and the best of friends in a moment of temper. (*Takes his hat from him.*) Sir Daniel, I think you are a little hard on Mrs. Dane. Lionel doesn't want a legal machine to grind out the evidence. He wants a friend to stand by him and the woman he loves. Come, shake hands with him and promise you'll help him. (*She joins their hands.*)

SIR D. Forgive me, my dear boy. I didn't mean to wound you.

LAL. Forgive me, sir. I can't bear that anyone should speak ill of her.

LADY E. And now let us put our heads together and set to work to do our best to clear her.

SIR D. Ah! How can we do that?

LAL. You soon cleared that poor governess who was accused of stealing the bracelet!

SIR D. Because she came to me and told me a plain, simple story which I was able to verify.

LADY E. I'll write a note to Mrs. Dane and ask her to step over; then I'll advise her to tell her story to you, and put herself entirely in your hands.

SIR D. That may be very unkind to her.

LADY E. Why?

SIR D. For the past fortnight I have kept away from Mrs. Dane, I have tried to keep Lal away from her, because we have not a single fact to go upon. Risby, who is responsible for this story, doesn't answer your letter. Mrs. Dane herself keeps silence. Now suppose this story is true—(*indignant gesture from* LAL). My dear Lal, have patience! If it's false, we shall soon be able to demolish it and put Mrs. Dane right with the world. But suppose it's true, you force her hand, you make it impossible for her to hide it, and you give Mrs. Bulsom-Porter a public triumph over her. Don't you think it might be kinder to Mrs. Dane to wait?

LAL. No. Lady Eastney, will you write to Mrs. Dane, and say that we all think she should stop these stories at once, by coming over here and giving Sir Daniel the means of proving them false.

LADY E. (*Seats herself at writing-table.*) After all, we only want to know the truth.

SIR D. You'll get it that way. (*To* LAL.)

Lal, if I take this story to pieces and find it false, I won't say another word; you shall marry Mrs. Dane as soon as you please.

LAL. Thank you, sir.

SIR D. But—don't be angry with me—if I find it true, of course there's an end to everything between you and her?

LAL. Of course, sir.

Enter, left, ADAMS, *announcing* CANON BONSEY. *Enter* CANON BONSEY. *He shakes hands with* SIR DANIEL *and* LAL. LADY EASTNEY *smiles and nods to* CANON *from writing-table.*

LADY E. Adams, will you send this note to Mrs. Dane at once?

LAL. I'll take it myself, Lady Eastney.

LAL *takes letter and goes off, left. Exit* ADAMS, *left.*

LADY E. (*shaking hands with* CANON). I'm delighted you've come. Is there anything fresh?

CANON B. I met Bulsom-Porter this morning; he is most anxious to withdraw, or apologize, or do anything to smooth the matter over.

LADY E. I saw Mrs. Bulsom-Porter yesterday, and I'm quite sure she will never withdraw anything that can damage the reputation of another woman. It would be a concession to immorality.

SIR D. You've not seen Mrs. Dane again, I suppose, Canon?

CANON B. No. I called ten days ago and dropped a hint that under the circumstances it would be advisable for her not to take a stall at the bazaar.

SIR D. Did she take the hint?

CANON B. No; somehow or the other she managed to convince me that she was a very much ill-used woman, and I left her with the understanding that she should take the stall.

LADY E. Then she will?

CANON B. Well, this morning I understand our dear duchess has got wind of the story, and is going to send for me, and mercilessly haul me over the coals; in fact, I hear she refuses to open the bazaar unless Mrs. Dane retires; so between these two dear ladies my peace of mind is likely to be rudely shaken, if not rent in twain. Such is my reward for twenty-five years' management of this parish, on the principle of the widest toleration for everybody's views in doctrine, and everybody's practices in morals.

LADY E. But you say Mrs. Dane convinced you that she was a very ill-used woman.

CANON B. She did. But then I was very willing to be convinced.

LADY E. Did you think her manner was that of an innocent woman?

CANON B. So far as I could judge. But, dear Lady Eastney, I am the veriest amateur in dealing with your sex; and so far as your manner goes, I wouldn't presume to say that any one of you could ever be guilty of anything. Eh, Sir Daniel?

SIR D. I never judge from manner alone. There is the confusion of guilt and the confusion of innocence; the brazen self-confidence of guilt and the serene self-confidence of innocence—I won't pretend I know which is which—except that sometimes a look, a gesture, a word, will give you a peep into the very soul of a man or woman, and you cry at once, "This is certain guilt," or "This is certain innocence."

LADY E. I wonder if we shall get such a peep to-day?

CANON B. How?

LADY E. I've just written to ask Mrs. Dane to come on here and meet Sir Daniel and you and Mrs. Bulsom-Porter.

Enter ADAMS *announcing* MR. *and* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER. *Enter* MR. *and* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER. *Exit* ADAMS. *Hand-shakes and how-d'ye-do's exchanged between* LADY EASTNEY *and* MR. *and* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER, CANON BONSEY *and* MR. *and* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER; SIR DANIEL, *and* MR. *and* MRS. BULSOM-POR-

TER. SIR DANIEL *retires to a corner and watches.*

LADY E. (*cordially to* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER). Now this is very charming of you. We shall be able to talk this little matter over before Mrs. Dane comes.

MRS. BUL.-P. I didn't understand that Mrs. Dane was to be present (*glancing sharply at* BULSOM-PORTER). Of course Mr. Bulsom-Porter is pleased. He sees nothing objectionable in his wife meeting her.

BUL.-P. My dear, if you consider Mrs. Dane's company objectionable, pray don't stay. I don't think I shall come to much harm, so I'll risk it.

(MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *looks very indignantly at* BULSOM-PORTER.)

LADY E. (*hurriedly*). Of course you know that Mrs. Dane denies this story?

MRS. BUL-P. Naturally she would. But I'm hourly expecting some very important information.

LADY E. About Mrs. Dane?

MRS. BUL.-P. Yes. The messenger is now on his way from town, and I've directed him to be sent over from my house the moment he arrives, if you don't mind.

LADY E. Certainly not. We only wish to get at the truth.

BUL.-P. I've heard nothing about this messenger. Who is he?

MRS. BUL.-P. That's my business for the present. I have taken this affair entirely into my own hands.

BUL.-P. The last time you took an affair into your own hands you involved me in a law-suit which cost me a thousand pounds

MRS. BUL.-P. The hussy was guilty, but she made eyes at the jury. Of course they were men. What could you expect? They gave her damages.

BUL.-P. So would I, if it hadn't been coming out of my own pocket.

MRS. BUL.-P. On the whole the money was well spent. The matter was thoroughly ventilated, as I intend this shall be.

LADY E. But, my dear Mrs. Bulsom-Porter, you surely wish to find yourself mistaken in this story?

MRS. BUL.-P. Of course I should be very pleased to find myself mistaken, but my instincts tell me that I'm not; and my instincts in these cases are invariably right.

LADY E. But have you nothing better than mere instincts to guide you?

MRS. BUL.-P. Yes. There is a curious expression on Mrs. Dane's face which exactly corresponds with that of a Miss Spooner—(*glances*

sternly at BULSOM-PORTER) I need not pursue the story.

BUL.-P. There was no story (*sighs deeply*), I regret to say.

MRS. BUL.-P. (*very severely*). You might have the good taste to leave your flippancies at home. If this woman is guilty, as I am convinced she is, I'm sure Canon Bonsey, as a clergyman will own that I have rendered a very great service to Sunningwater Society in not allowing the matter to rest.

CANON B. Quite true. Whenever it is necessary that any disagreeable scandal should be stirred up for the good of Society, I'm very much obliged to those dear, good people who will kindly stir it up for me, and save me the trouble. And with regard to the present case, I hope you'll ask Sir Daniel to give you the benefit of his vast legal experience, and then—then it won't be necessary to stir it up any further, will it?

LADY E. Sir Daniel will be only too pleased to give us his advice. Sir Daniel, why don't you come and help us?

SIR D. (*rising, coming forward*). Help you talk it over? Will you please give me one single fact, one single scrap of evidence to go upon, and I'll then join the fray on one side or the other, as the case may be? Mrs. Bulsom-Porter, didn't I hear you say that you had a messenger now on his

way from town with some important information? Who is he?

MRS. BUL.-P. I'd rather not say.

SIR D. Where does he get the information?

MRS. BUL.-P. He has been over to Vienna on purpose.

SIR D. That sounds hopeful. What means has he of getting at the truth?

MRS. BUL.-P. Every means.

SIR D. Better and better! Surely you might tell us who this omniscient person is?

MRS. BUL.-P. When I saw that my husband was determined to shelter this woman, and prevent the truth from coming to light, I sent up to town for Mr. Fendick, the private detective——

BUL.-P. (*startled*). What!?

MRS. BUL.-P. And instructed him to make all inquiries, no matter at what expense.

BUL.-P. What?! Now please understand I entirely dissociate myself from your action.

MRS. BUL.-P. It's of no consequence. I can proceed alone.

Enter LAL, *left.*

BUL.-P. But my dear Henrietta——

LAL. Mrs. Dane is here. Shall I ask her to come in?

LADY E. One moment, Lionel.

BUL.-P. (*to* LAL). Will you please ask Mrs. Dane if she will spare me a few minutes? I have an explanation to make to her.

(*Exit* LIONEL, *left.*)

MRS. BUL.-P. If you have any explanation to make to that lady you will please make it in my presence.

LADY E. Aren't we getting a little heated? I want to have a few words with Mrs. Dane alone—Ah!——

Enter MRS. DANE, *left. She is dressed very simply, is very quiet and self-possessed, and is followed by* LIONEL, *who stands at door, left. She bows all round.* SIR DANIEL *and* BULSOM-PORTER *return her bow cordially.*

MRS. D. I didn't quite understand your note, Lady Eastney, but you see I'm here.

LADY E. (*going to her, cordially shaking hands*). I'm very glad you've come. I wanted a few minutes' talk with you. Won't you sit down? It's fearfully hot indoors. Suppose you all go down to the summer-house and I'll send you some cooling drinks. Canon, will you see that Mrs. Bulsom-Porter is made comfortable?

CANON B. Delighted. (*To* MRS. DANE) How-d'ye-do, my dear Mrs. Dane? (*shaking hands*). Then we'll wait you in the summer-

house. (*Going to* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER) Allow me.

(*Taking her parasol, opening it, waits for her to go off.* SIR DANIEL *and* MRS. DANE *are watching each other furtively—he very searchingly, she quiet, self-possessed.* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *waits a moment to see that her husband does not speak to* MRS. DANE, *then goes off with the* CANON. *Exeunt* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *and* CANON, *right.*)

BUL.-P. (*confidentially to* SIR DANIEL, *who is quietly watching* MRS. DANE. *In a quiet voice.*) I say (*draws him aside*), how am I to stop my wife from dragging me into another confounded lawsuit?

SIR D. Ah! Come and talk it over.

(*Exeunt* SIR DANIEL *and* BULSOM-PORTER, *right,* SIR DANIEL *turning to glance slightly at* MRS. DANE *as he goes off.* LIONEL *comes from door, left.*)

LADY E. Lionel, will you find Adams and ask him to take tea and iced drinks to the summer-house?

(LAL *shakes hands with* LADY EASTNEY *in thankfulness for her consideration*

for MRS. DANE *and goes off through conservatory.*)

LADY E. Now my dear Mrs. Dane, you know that I am your friend and Lionel's friend.

MRS. D. Yes.

LADY E. And between ourselves I hate Mrs. Bulsom-Porter with the most ungodly, unchristian hatred. I'm only waiting for some tolerable excuse to get everybody in Sunningwater to cut her. Lionel has told you what she says of you?

MRS. D. He says that she is spreading some story about my being a Miss Hindemarsh. What is the use of taking any notice of such a tale?

LADY E. You must take notice of it.

MRS. D. I have denied it.

LADY E. You must do more than that. Lionel is waiting to make you his wife——

MRS. D. If he doesn't believe me I do not wish to bind him. (*Triumphantly*) But he does believe me.

LADY E. Yes, but Sir Daniel——

MRS. D. If Sir Daniel doesn't believe me what happiness can there be for me if I marry Mr. Carteret?

LADY E. Then you mean to give him up? Is that right? Is it wise? Is it kind to Lionel? Then there are your other friends; we are all waiting, I am waiting, to give this woman the lie and

show her the door. If you don't defend yourself what are we to think?

MRS. D. You think I am an imposter?

LADY E. No. I said to Sir Daniel a few minutes ago that I should have acted throughout as you have done——

MRS. D. (*very gratefully*). Thank you! Thank you!

LADY E. Up to the present moment. There is a point at which it is prudent to neglect slander—if it's false. There is a point at which it is imprudent, impossible to neglect slander—unless it is true. You have reached that point. This story is being repeated everywhere. Why won't you trust yourself to Sir Daniel?

MRS. D. What does Sir Daniel propose to do?

LADY E. To hear the story of your life, obtain the evidence for it, and then get Mrs. Bulsom-Porter to make you an ample apology.

MRS. D. (*cunningly*). I suppose Sir Daniel has no doubt he would be able to prove my story?

LADY E. My dear Mrs. Dane, the cleverest lawyer of our generation! And he is only waiting one word from you to undertake your defence. If you refuse, what inference will everybody draw?

Enter LAL *hastily, right.*

LAL. Lady Eastney, what do you suppose

Mrs. Bulsom-Porter has done? She has gone to Fendick, the private detective. (*A spasm of fright passes over* MRS. DANE'S *face, which is hidden from them.*) Did you know of it?

LADY E. She said she was expecting some information this afternoon. I've told Mrs. Dane that she must meet this slander.

(MRS. DANE *has recovered from her fright and regained her self-assurance. After a moment's deliberation she takes an opened telegram from her pocket and gives it to* LADY EASTNEY.)

MRS. D. (*very quietly*). Read that, Lady Eastney.

LADY E. (*taking telegram*). From whom?

MRS. D. From Mr. Risby.

LADY E. (*Takes telegram from envelope—it is on two sheets; reads.*) "Lady Eastney writes me that Mrs. Bulsom-Porter repeats some absurd story about you. Am writing Lady Eastney this post that I was quite mistaken in recognizing you. If any further trouble, let me know and will immediately set matter right. James Risby, Schweizerhof, Lucerne." When did you get this?

MRS. D. Yesterday.

LADY E. But this explains everything. Why didn't you show it us at once? (*Rings bell.*)

MRS. D. Why should I? You forget that you and all Sunningwater are very much concerned to

know whether I'm this Miss Somebody. I have told you that I'm not, and you don't believe me. Why should I trouble any further?

Enter ADAMS, *left.*

LADY E. Is the afternoon post in, Adams?

ADAMS. Not yet, my lady.

LADY E. Bring my letters to me the moment they arrive.

ADAMS. Yes, my lady. (*Exit.*)

LAL. The thing is quite clear. Risby has made a mistake. May I show that telegram to my father?

MRS. D. No. Let Mrs. Bulsom-Porter repeat her slanders, and pay her detectives to repeat them. I shall not take the least notice of her.

LADY E. You must! You owe it to Lionel to prove this story false. Let me show this telegram to Sir Daniel?

MRS. D. (*after a pause*). Very well. As you please.

LADY E. We will very soon settle Mrs. Bulsom-Porter. (*Exit right, with telegram.*)

LAL (*lingering*). My father has been asking for evidence. Now he has got it.

MRS. D. Yes. But suppose Sir Daniel cannot prove my innocence, suppose this story is still believed and we are parted after all, you will remember that I shall love you till my last breath, with

all the love of my heart, with all that is best and truest in me?

LAL. Yes, but we shan't be parted. Come and tell my father everything.

MRS. D. That woman is there. I hate scenes of any kind.

LAL. Then I'll bring him to you.

(*She shows him a radiant, smiling face. He runs off right. The moment he has gone she utters a sharp cry, followed by a long groan of despair, sits down on sofa with a white, drawn, haggard face, wringing her hands, staring in front of her.—A pause. The door, left, opening into drawing-room, has been left open. Voices heard off.*)

ADAMS. What name did you say?

FENDICK. (*Voice heard off.*) Fendick.

ADAMS. You say Mrs. Bulsom-Porter does expect you?

FENDICK. Yes. She left word at home I was to come on here to her.

ADAMS. I'll let her know you're here.

Enter ADAMS, *left, crosses and exit, right.* MRS. DANE *creeps up to door, left, looks through it, utters a little cry of alarm, and comes away. Enter, left,* FENDICK, *an ordinary-looking, middle-class man about forty, clean shaven.*

FENDICK. I beg pardon—(*stops, seeing her*). Oh!

MRS. D. Fendick! You, Fendick! You gave me some other name. Why did you come to my house a fortnight ago?

FENDICK. Well, you see, the fact is, I wanted to get a photograph of you in the way of business, and so I adopted the slight ruse of saying I was taking photographic views of the neighbourhood, and I asked you to give me an opportunity of taking a view from your garden.

MRS. D. Did you get a photograph of me?

FENDICK. My partner took two whilst I was chatting with you and taking off your attention. (*She shows great fright.*) I know it was rather shabby, but my profession has its shabby side.

MRS. D. What use have you made of the photograph?

FENDICK. Well, of course that's my business. There! (*looks all round*) you treated me very well that day—if it's any use to you to know, I've been over to Vienna for Mrs. Bulsom-Porter, and after a good deal of trouble I found a man over there that remembers Miss Hindemarsh, and can recognize her if necessary. I mustn't say any more.

MRS. D. Yes! You're a detective. I'll employ you. Name your own sum. I'll give you double, treble, ten times what she gives. You'll

find some one that knows that I'm not this Miss Hindemarsh—not the least like her?

FENDICK. No, ma'am, I can't. Thank you all the same.

MRS. D. (*getting more frantic*). Yes! Yes! You must! I say you must! Don't ruin me! This man in Vienna? He doesn't know who and where I am now?

FENDICK. Not unless I bring him over.

MRS. D. But you won't! He won't recognize me. You've been to Vienna. Listen! Please understand from this time I employ you, and you shall be handsomely paid. There's nobody who recognizes me. I'm not in the least like that lady. You understand?

FENDICK. I can't do it. I can't, indeed. It might be found out.

MRS. D. It shan't be. How can it? Oh, how can I move you? I'll give you every farthing I have. Don't betray me! Don't betray me! It's everything to me—my happiness, my life, my all. Oh, don't ruin me! Hush! (*She looks off right, points him off left, whispering as he goes off*) You won't betray me?

(*She comes back, with an immense effort regains her self-possession, takes a novel, and sits on sofa.*)

Enter LAL, *right, followed by* ADAMS, *who crosses and exit, left.*

LAL. My father is coming. I made him promise to take up your case and fight it through.

MRS. D. How kind of him.

ADAMS (*speaking off, left.* MRS. DANE *listens, with great apprehension*). Mrs. Bulsom-Porter will be here in a minute if you will wait.

Enter SIR DANIEL *and* LADY EASTNEY, *right.*

LADY E. Here is your champion. Tell him everything.

SIR D. If I can be of any service I shall be delighted.

ADAMS *re-enters left, and brings letter on tray to* LADY EASTNEY. *She takes it, reads it. Exit* ADAMS, *left, closing the door after him.*

MRS. D. (*to* SIR DANIEL). When I heard this story was being circulated I thought it would be better to take no notice and let it die a natural death. Don't you think I was wise?

SIR D. Very wise, if it had died a natural death. But you see it hasn't. So suppose we set to work and crush the life out of it, shall we?

MRS. D. Shan't I be trespassing upon you? Won't it be wasting your valuable time?

SIR D. I've no hobby but my profession, so it won't be a waste of time to spend a few hours in the long vacation to free you from an unjust sus-

picion. (LAL *comes up to them.*) I said I had no hobby but my profession. That isn't true. This young fellow (*taking* LAL'S *arm affectionately*) is another very dear hobby of mine. You, too, are concerned for his happiness?

(*Watching her very closely.*)

MRS. D. Yes, indeed.

SIR D. (*watching her keenly*). And therefore you wish me to sift this affair thoroughly? (*She is going to speak.*) Knowing that the happiness of his whole life is staked on the result?

MRS. D. I only wish for his happiness—not my own. Do just as you please.

SIR D. Then you place yourself entirely in my hands?

MRS. D. Yes; most willingly. How can I thank you?

SIR D. Wait till I deserve your thanks.

LADY E. (*Has been reading the letter.*) Really the whole affair is too absurdly simple.

Enter MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *at window, followed by* BULSOM-PORTER *and* CANON BONSEY.

MRS. BUL.-P. Lady Eastney, there's a man waiting to see me. Will you allow me?

LADY E. Certainly. I believe he is in the next room, but (*stopping her*) I think you should hear this letter first. It is from your nephew, Mr. Risby. "Dear Lady Eastney, I have received your

letter. It is quite true that at the first glance I thought I recognized in Mrs. Dane a lady whom I had previously met, and I casually mentioned the fact to my aunt, Mrs. Bulsom-Porter. But on seeing Mrs. Dane a second time, I discovered my mistake, and I told Mrs. Bulsom-Porter of my error. Will you express my sincere regrets to Mrs. Dane, and will you assure anyone who may revive the story that it is utterly false." What more do we want? (*Hands the letter to* SIR DANIEL, *who reads it carefully.* LADY EASTNEY *then turns to* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER.) Surely that is enough, and you will be only too glad to own to Mrs. Dane that you're mistaken.

MRS. BUL.-P. (*a little taken aback*). I don't know. I should like to hear what Fendick has to say.

SIR D. (*suddenly, as if struck with an idea*). One moment. Mrs. Dane has already placed herself in my hands. Mrs. Bulsom-Porter, may I offer you my services?

MRS. BUL.-P. For what purpose?

SIR D. To get at the truth. You have circulated a story which from this letter seems to be quite false. Your husband has asked me to use my influence to prevent the very disagreeable consequences which are likely to follow. Will you allow me to call in Mr. Fendick, and ask him a few questions?

MRS. BUL.-P. Well, I——

BUL.-P. Yes, if you please, Sir Daniel. I shall be guided entirely by you.

SIR D. Lady Eastney, you will permit me? (LADY EASTNEY *nods assent.* SIR DANIEL *goes to door, left, and calls*) Mr. Fendick!

FENDICK *enters, left*

SIR D. (*to* FENDICK). You've been to Vienna lately?

FENDICK. Yes, sir.

SIR D. To ask certain questions about a lady who formerly lived there, a Miss Hindemarsh?

FENDICK. Yes, sir.

SIR D. What are the results of your inquiries?

FENDICK. Well, sir, I'm not at liberty to say, as you're not employing me.

SIR D. Mrs. Bulsom-Porter wishes you to speak.

MRS. BUL.-P. Will you please tell us all that you've found out in Vienna?

FENDICK. In respect of what, ma'am?

SIR D. Perhaps I'd better put a direct question. Is Miss Hindemarsh identical with a lady who is now living in this neighbourhood?

FENDICK. This neighbourhood?

SIR D. Is Miss Hindemarsh identical with a lady who is now in this room? (*turning to* MRS. DANE). Is this lady Miss Hindemarsh?

FENDICK. No, sir.

SIR D. (*very searchingly*). You're quite sure?

FENDICK. Quite sure, sir.

SIR D. You have trustworthy evidence that she is not Miss Hindemarsh?

FENDICK. Yes, sir.

SIR D. What evidence have you?

FENDICK (*producing photograph*). I took this portrait over to Vienna (*giving photograph to* SIR DANIEL), and the parties over there that remember Miss Hindemarsh, say distinctly that this isn't the lady.

SIR D. She doesn't resemble Miss Hindemarsh?

FENDICK. No, sir. Not in the least like her.

SIR D. Thank you. We shall want fuller information, but that will do for the present. (*Opens the door for him, left. Exit* FENDICK. *To* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER) I'm afraid you've committed yourself very deeply. On Mrs. Dane's behalf I shall have to insist that you withdraw this story without the least reserve.

MRS. BUL.-P. In what way?

SIR D. May I suggest a form? If you will allow me I will draw it out, and you can sign it before leaving the room.

(SIR DANIEL *sits down to write.*)

CANON B. (*coming up to* MRS. DANE). I congratulate you (*shaking hands, looking round*). I

think we are all to be congratulated. You upon the pleasant termination to this very unpleasant affair; myself upon the restoration of peace to this idyllic neighbourhood; and Mrs. Bulsom-Porter for having stirred up this matter so vigorously, and to an issue which, I am sure, must be as gratifying to her, as it was evidently unexpected.

(*Smiling on* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER.)

BUL.-P. I hope Mrs. Dane will allow me to offer her my sincere regrets. (*To* MRS. DANE.)

MRS. D. Thank you. I was so sorry that I was not at home the other day when you called. You will forgive me for not answering your note?

MRS. BUL.-P. (*to* BULSOM-PORTER). Your note? You've been making (BULSOM-PORTER *comes over to her*) calls and leaving notes on——

BUL.-P. (*quietly*). For heaven's sake keep your hysterics till you get home.

(*Tries to soothe her.*)

SIR D. (*having written, comes to* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER). Will you kindly read it over and sign it?

MRS. BUL.-P. (*glancing at note*). But this is a public apology!

SIR D. I have made it as agreeable as I could.

MRS. BUL.-P. A public apology! (*Again looks at it.*) No. I'm quite sure from my nephew's manner that he was concealing some-

thing. I shall not apologize or withdraw anything until I've made further inquiries.

(*She is about to tear up the paper.*)

SIR D. (*stops her very quietly*). Pardon me. Don't tear that. (*To* LADY EASTNEY) Where is Mr. Risby now?

LADY E. At the Schweizerhof, Lucerne.

SIR D. To-day is Saturday. We can get him back next week. (*To* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER) You have slandered an innocent lady without the least justification. Take that paper home, think the matter over, and—will you accept a piece of advice from an old lawyer—gratis—let me have it signed and witnessed by next Saturday. The alternative will be very troublesome, very humiliating to you, and terribly expensive—to your husband. (*Gesture of despair from* BULSOM-PORTER.) Take it home. Let me have it signed and witnessed by next Saturday.

MRS. D. How good of you!

(LADY EASTNEY *has rung the bell.* ADAMS *enters, left.*)

LADY E. The door, Adams.

MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *goes off, left, followed by* BULSOM-PORTER.)

CURTAIN

Four days pass between Acts II and III.

ACT III

SCENE—Library at SIR DANIEL CARTERET'S, Sunningwater. A cosy room in a modern red brick house. At back, a fireplace with a looking-glass in the overmantel. Door up stage, right. A large bow window, left, with doors opening out upon lawn. A table up stage left. A writing-table down stage, right, littered with books and papers. A sofa down stage, left. Bookshelves all round the room.

TIME—The following Wednesday afternoon. Discover SIR DANIEL at fireplace, looking in the glass, arranging a flower in his buttonhole, regarding himself critically.

Enter WILSON *right, announcing* LADY EASTNEY.
Enter LADY EASTNEY. *Exit* WILSON.

LADY E. (*shaking hands*). You're busy?

SIR D. Yes; trying to persuade myself I am forty—solely on your account.

LADY E. That's not necessary. I like you well enough as you are.

SIR D. (*tenderly*). Give me the best proof of that.

LADY E. I have. I'm here a quarter of an hour before my time.

SIR D. You couldn't be that in my house.

LADY E. How are matters going with Mrs. Dane?

SIR D. Splendidly (*going up to writing-table; taking up two sheets of foolscap, closely written over in a lady's hand*). She has given me a detailed history of her whole life. She accounts for every moment from her childhood.

LADY E. Has Mr. Fendick sent his evidence?

SIR D. Yes, it came this morning. That's quite satisfactory too (*taking up another paper from table*).

LADY E. And Mr. Risby?

SIR D. He's coming specially from Lucerne to put matters right. I expect him almost every moment, and Fendick is also running down from town for a little conference, so to-night I shall have all the threads of the case in my hands, and then——

LADY E. Then?

SIR D. Then I shall be able to talk to Mrs. Bulsom-Porter.

LADY E. I'm delighted. The whole neighbourhood is still in a perfect fever over the affair. Nothing else is talked about.

SIR D. I wish there wasn't quite so much gossip about it.

LADY E. My dear Sir Daniel, we live in a residential neighbourhood in a wicked world, and what possible occupation is there for us poor women except to discuss scandal, or—to create it? You've met the new red-haired curate? He was at Mrs. Deveson's garden-party yesterday. He has espoused Mrs. Dane's cause with all the fury of his flaming locks.

SIR D. Rather a dangerous champion, I should say.

LADY E. H'm, I don't know. He'll rally all the High Church to our side. Wrench, the curate from Latterfield, was there too. Wrench is black-browed and Evangelical. Well, our red-haired man got into a heated argument with Wrench, first about Catholic practices, and then about Mrs. Dane—redhead went wagging against blackhead—it was all I could do to prevent a scrimmage——

SIR D. What happened?

LADY E. I allured flaming locks to a shady corner, and dosed him with cold counsel and iced lemon squash. Oh, I forgot——

SIR D. What?

LADY E. The duchess was there. She's going to make an important call on you this afternoon.

SIR D. Why?

LADY E. She's very much interested in Mrs. Dane's affair, and wants to know all about it. We shall find the duchess a useful ally.

SIR D. (*handling the foolscap*). We shall need no ally, except the truth.

LADY E. (*smiling*). Won't you? The truth is all very well, Sir Daniel, but if I had to live down a scandal, I'd rather have a duchess on my side.

LAL *enters at window.*

LAL. How d'ye do, Lady Eastney?

LADY E. How d'ye do? (*Shaking hands.*)

LAL. Risby hasn't turned up yet?

SIR D. (*taking out watch*). No, I expect him very soon. You haven't brought Mrs. Dane?

LAL. No. She has thought of some more particulars of her history; she's writing them out for you.

SIR D. Go back and tell her not to trouble any further, and ask her to be here to meet Risby in (*taking out watch*) ten minutes.

LAL. All right. Lady Eastney, I can't thank you enough.

LADY E. What for?

LAL. For helping us to beat down these horrible lies.

LADY E. My dear Lal, I feel very strongly about it, and I shan't rest till I've worked the whole neighbourhood into a frenzy of virtuous sympathy for Mrs. Dane, and a frenzy of virtuous indignation against Mrs. Bulsom-Porter. Give

my love to Mrs. Dane, and tell her that, will you?

LAL. God bless you! Then I'll go and fetch Lucy, sir?

SIR D. (*has been studying* MRS. DANE'S *foolscap paper*). Yes. Bring her at once.

(*Exit* LAL *at window with a bright look of gratitude to* LADY EASTNEY; LADY EASTNEY *and* SIR DANIEL *go up to window and look after him.*

LADY E. You're quite reconciled to their engagement?

SIR D. Yes. I find I'm beginning to like her very much. I think the boy will be happy with her!

LADY E. You seem to take a greater interest in Lionel's love-affairs than you do in your own.

SIR D. Ah no! You shouldn't say that. But you have discouraged me so often——

LADY E. I, discouraged you?! Why I've encouraged you to propose to me I don't know how many times.

SIR D. Give me a little encouragement now.

LADY E. I am a woman. I am twenty-eight. My first essay in marriage was not a conspicuous success. On the other hand, it was not a disastrous failure. Altogether I'm quite willing to make a fresh experiment. But, on the other hand, I'm quite happy in my present state. It has very great advantages. I shall need a very great deal

of wooing before I am induced to change it. Indeed, on second thoughts why should I change it at all?

SIR D. I wouldn't have you change it, except for a happier one.

LADY E. I won't, if I can help it. But there's the rub. I like you very much, but, honestly, I don't love you. At least (*looking him up and down critically*) I don't think I do. But there again, I'm open to persuasion.

SIR D. Give me the benefit of the doubt.

LADY E. I will—and say "No."

SIR D. "No?!"

LADY E. If I say "Yes" how can I be sure that Mr. Somebody Else won't come along and make me sorry all my life that I didn't say "No."

SIR D. Is Mr. Somebody Else likely to come?

LADY E. How can I tell? He's always hanging about just round the corner, and if I married you, and you neglected me, or were unkind, I'm sure he'd turn up, and I do believe I should listen to the wretch, and then—heigho!

SIR D. Be my wife and if Mr. Somebody Else ever wins a word, or a look, or a thought from you, I'll own it's my fault, and I'll forgive him and you too.

LADY E. (*looks up at him*). You know I shall end by accepting you.

SIR D. I'm sure you will.

LADY E. Then I'm sure I won't. At least not until——

SIR D. Not until when?

LADY E. Not until I've made up my mind. I want to be persuaded, I want to be wooed. I want you to see in me a thousand more perfections than ever a woman had, and value me a thousand times more than ever a woman was valued.

SIR D. I couldn't value you more than I do.

LADY E. (*Shakes her head and smiles.*) It won't do! It won't do! With every wish in the world to oblige you, I really cannot sell my liberty at your present quotations.

Enter WILSON *announcing* MISS COLQUHOUN. *Enter* JANET. *Exit* WILSON.

JANET. How d'ye do, Sir Daniel?

SIR D. (*shakes hands*). How are you, dear?

JANET. Auntie, Mrs. Patterson has just come over to see you about her mission to the Indian women. Can you spare her just a few minutes?

LADY E. A few minutes? My dear child, Mrs. Patterson is a woman with a mission, and it takes years to persuade people out of that folly.

Enter LAL *at window.*

LAL. I've brought Lucy, sir. She's here—— (*stops, seeing* JANET).

(*Exit at window, shame-faced.*)

JANET. Auntie, you will let Mrs. Patterson take me away from England?

LADY E. I'll come and talk it over with her, dear. (*Puts* JANET *off at door, which has been left open. To* SIR DANIEL) I'll come back by-and-by to see how everything goes with Mrs. Dane.

(*Exit* LADY EASTNEY. *He closes the door after her, and goes up to writing-table, takes up* MRS. DANE'S *and* FENDICK'S *notes. Enter* MRS. DANE *and* LAL *at window. She has a large blue envelope in her hand.*)

MRS. D. How d'ye do, Sir Daniel?

SIR D. (*shaking hands very cordially*). How d'ye do?

MRS. D. Have you read my statement?

SIR D. Every word. I congratulate you.

MRS. D. On what?

SIR D. On having told a perfectly plain, straightforward story, in a perfectly plain, straightforward way.

MRS. D. I only put down what I knew and felt, just as it came to me. I've jotted down a few more notes.

(*Taking out of the envelope another sheet of foolscap, which is partly written over.*)

SIR D. (*taking sheet*). You've already given me all I want.

MRS. D. Tell me what else I can do?

SIR D. (*Takes her hands, very quietly and tenderly.*) Leave yourself in my hands, and wait the result with perfect confidence.

Enter WILSON, *right, announcing* MR. RISBY. *Enter* RISBY, *right. Exit* WILSON.

MRS. D. (*rather quickly and eagerly*). Oh, Mr. Risby, how d'ye do?

(RISBY *is a little taken aback; she gives him a significant glance, and he returns her greeting very cordially.*)

RISBY. Ah, my dear Mrs. Dane! (*Shakes hands very cordially with her, then goes to* SIR DANIEL.) Sir Daniel!

(*Shakes hands with* SIR DANIEL.)

SIR D. How are you?

RISBY. Lionel!

(*Shaking hands with* LIONEL.)

LAL. How d'ye do?

RISBY (*To* SIR DANIEL). You got my wire?

SIR D. Yes, I'm really sorry to drag you half across Europe——

RISBY. Half across Europe? Mrs. Dane may be quite sure that I would willingly be dragged

half across the celestial spaces, if I can only repair my absurd mistake. (*Glancing at* LIONEL.) I suppose I may speak quite freely——

SIR D. Oh, yes. Lionel is to marry Mrs. Dane when we have cleared this up.

RISBY. Indeed. (*Goes to* LAL.) My congratulations—and to Mrs. Dane. That makes it all the more necessary that I should put matters right. Now tell me what can I do?

SIR D. You told Mrs. Bulsom-Porter that Mrs. Dane was in reality Miss Felicia Hindemarsh?

RISBY. Yes. I was misled by a certain general resemblance on seeing Mrs. Dane at some distance. When I got quite close to her I saw that I had made a horrible blunder.

SIR D. Of course you withdraw the statement?

RISBY. Utterly and entirely, with a thousand apologies.

SIR D. And suppose we have to bring the matter into court? (MRS. DANE *watches* RISBY *anxiously.*)

RISBY. Will that be necessary?

SIR D. I hope not. I think not. But we must be prepared. We should need your evidence.

RISBY. Of course—if I'm in England. But I expect to make a very extended tour, and might be absent for a year or two.

SIR D. Then we must take your evidence before you start.

RISBY. Certainlly. But you'll keep it out of court, won't you?

SIR D. I shall do my best. But we shall want you to say that this lady is not Felicia Hindemarsh, whom you knew in Vienna.

RISBY. By all means. But before I leave Sunningwater I'll go over to auntie and try again to drive that fact into her comprehension.

SIR D. That might help us.

RISBY. I'll go at once. (*Takes up his hat.*)

Enter WILSON, *right.*

WILSON. Her Grace has called, Sir Daniel. I've shown her into the drawing-room.

SIR D. Very well, Wilson. Tell her Grace I'll be there in a moment. (*Exit* WILSON, *right.*)

RISBY. Is there anything further that you wish to know?

SIR D. I think not. When do you leave England?

RISBY. In a day or two—as soon as I can get away.

SIR D. I've given Mrs. Bulsom-Porter till Saturday to choose between a lawsuit and an apology. Can you stay till after then?

RISBY. Certainly. I'll hold myself at your dis-

posal till Monday night. The Senior University will find me till then.

SIR D. Very well.

RISBY. Good-bye, if all goes well and I don't see you again.

SIR D. Good-bye. (*Shakes hands with* RISBY —*turns to* MRS. DANE.) You'll wait here, won't you? I expect Fendick every moment. I must go and get rid of this bothering old woman——

MRS. D. I understand she has come to make inquiries about me?

SIR D. Yes, I believe. I shall be able to set her mind at rest. (*Exit, right.*)

MRS. D. (*to* RISBY). It was so good of you to come and help us——

RISBY. Surely I could do no less.

MRS. D. Thank you so much. (*Suddenly.*) Lionel——

LAL. Yes?

MRS. D. I've left my keys in my escritoire. And it's open. There are some letters of yours— I wouldn't like them to be read. Would you mind running across and locking it, and bringing me the keys?

LAL. Yes, if you wish. I shall see you again, Risby?

RISBY. Yes, I daresay.

(*Exit* LIONEL *at window. They both watch him off. She then turns to*

RISBY *in a burst of gratitude, wrings his hands.*)

MRS. D. Thank you, with all my heart!

RISBY. Hush! Take care!

(*Looks round warningly.*)

MRS. D. Sir Daniel seems to be quite satisfied——

RISBY. Yes, I think I've pulled you through so far. But I've gone as far as it's safe to go—perhaps farther. (*Very emphatically*) Whatever you do, you must keep Sir Daniel from bringing it into court.

MRS. D. You think everything would come out?

RISBY. I fear so. This history of your life that you've given to Sir Daniel?

MRS. D. Yes?

RISBY. He has read it?

MRS. D. Yes, and he's quite satisfied. He says it's perfectly plain and straightforward. Naturally it would be, as I knew Lucy's life almost as well as I know my own.

RISBY. And she was really Mrs. Dane?

MRS. D. Yes; when she died I took her name and became her.

RISBY. And you think you can carry it out to the end?

MRS. D. Yes; I think I can now I've begun. I must! I must! Why do you look at me like

that? You think I'm a horrid creature—you despise me?

RISBY. No, no——

MRS. D. Yes, you do, I can see you do! Don't you think I despise myself? Do you think I'd do all this, if I could help myself, if there were any other way out of it? But I don't want you to despise me——

RISBY. Believe me, I am only sorry, deeply sorry for you. May I say one word—Lionel?

MRS. D. Well?

RISBY. Don't you think it would be better to tell him—safer?

MRS. D. I can't now. He loves me and believes in me.

RISBY. Good-bye. *(Offers hand.)*

MRS. D. *(again seizes his hand—wrings it with gratitude)*. Thanks! Thanks! This has shown me what a good and true friend a man can be to a woman!

RISBY. *(retaining her hand)*. I've been awfully puzzled what to do. When I called on you this morning I came to tell you to face the worst, that it would be impossible for me to hide the truth from Sir Daniel——

MRS. D. But you did!

RISBY. Yes. I'm not a very soft-hearted chap, but when I saw that tear, I felt I couldn't

round on you. I hope I've played the game fairly.

MRS. D. Fairly? Most generously to me.

RISBY. And I hope not unfairly to Lionel.

MRS. D. I'll make him the best and truest wife that ever lived. You believe that?

RISBY. Yes, I believe you will. Good-bye. (*Kisses her hand, drops it, looks at her.*) After all, it isn't always the good women who are the best for us rascals.

Enter WILSON, *showing in* FENDICK, *right.* MRS. DANE *shows very slight confusion, and a look is exchanged between her and* FENDICK, *which* RISBY *notices.*

WILSON. Sir Daniel is engaged for a minute, but he told me to tell you to wait.

FENDICK. All right. "No hurry," tell Sir Daniel. (*Exit* WILSON, *right.*)

RISBY. Good-bye.

(*She shakes his hand warmly. Exit* RISBY, *right.*)

MRS. D. Good morning.

FENDICK. Good morning.

MRS. D. Anything new since I saw you last night?

FENDICK. No. You're sure you can pull this

cousin business off? Got all your dates and facts at your fingers' ends?

MRS. D. Yes. We lived together all our lives except when I was a governess.

FENDICK. That's the time as you've got to be careful about. As I told you last night, I rummaged about pretty well amongst the chawbacons at Tawhampton, and so far as I can gather I don't think there's the requisite intelligence in Tawhampton to say that you aren't Lucy Allen. Especially as there was a likeness between you and your cousin.

MRS. D. Yes; we were the same height, and the same complexion.

FENDICK. Then you went as pupil teacher to Eastbourne?

MRS. D. Yes.

FENDICK. Ware off Eastbourne. The old dowager at the school would spot you at once. And I've got to mind my p's and q's about the concierge at Vienna——

MRS. D. But you say there isn't a concierge?

FENDICK. I fancy I can lay my hands on an old Italian friend, who'll pass at a pinch. But I tell you this, if I get out of this business with clean boots, I'll take good care I don't land myself in a dirty mess like this a second time.

MRS. D. I'm sorry you should call it that.

You know that I'm quite willing you should make any charge——

FENDICK. It isn't the money. If I'd known what I was letting myself in for I wouldn't have done it for a thousand pounds. But you worked on my feelings, so that before I knew where I was I'd said you weren't the woman. And I didn't recognize Sir Daniel in his private get-up. Hush! (*They compose themselves.*)

SIR DANIEL *enters, right.*

SIR D. Ah, Mr. Fendick, how d'ye do?

(*Goes up to writing-table and takes up* FENDICK'S *notes.*)

FENDICK. How d'ye do, Sir Daniel? I wasn't aware when I met you at Lady Eastney's the other day that I had the pleasure and honour of addressing the famous judge Sir Daniel Carteret?

SIR D. No, Mr. Fendick? There I had the advantage of you, for I was aware I was addressing Mr. Fendick, the famous detective.

FENDICK. Well, our professions are, in a manner of speaking, somewhat similar, aren't they?

SIR D. Not similar, Mr. Fendick. Say co-operative, mutually assistant and necessary to each other. You elicit the truth, I deal with it—when I get it. You catch the hare—I cook him.

FENDICK. Him or her as the case may be.

SIR D. Him or her as the case may be. Well, I don't think it will take long to hunt this hare down, eh?

FENDICK. No, Sir Daniel, I think not. You received my copy of the evidence I obtained in Vienna?

SIR. D. (*handling* FENDICK'S *notes*). Yes, it came this morning. It seems very satisfactory.

FENDICK. Most satisfactory, I thought, Sir Daniel.

SIR D. You rely chiefly upon the evidence of this concierge, I see. He is perfectly clear in his remembrance of Miss Hindemarsh?

FENDICK. Perfectly clear.

SIR D. (*taking up a photograph*). And from this photograph of Mrs. Dane, which, by the way, is a very good one——

FENDICK. Taken by my partner, Burton.

SIR D. He is prepared to swear that Mrs. Dane is not Miss Hindemarsh?

FENDICK. Yes, Sir Daniel.

SIR D. Have you sent Mrs. Bulsom-Porter a copy of this evidence?

FENDICK. No, Sir Daniel. When I called on her the other day, after seeing you at Lady Eastney's, she rowed me like a pickpocket——

SIR D. What for?

FENDICK. She said she'd sent me to Vienna to procure evidence of Mrs. Dane's guilt, instead of

which I'd gone and proved her innocent, with other remarks quite *infra. dig.* to me and my character.

SIR D. The woman must be mad!

FENDICK. That's what I say—mad on the rampage for social purity.

SIR D. I'll see Mr. Bulsom-Porter and explain to him how the matter stands.

FENDICK. Then I may consider the job concluded so far as I am concerned?

SIR D. Yes, I think so. We know where to find you.

FENDICK. Fifty-four Buckingham Street. Telegraphic address, Sharpshot, London. Good-day to you, Sir Daniel. Good-day to you ma'am. Glad this little affair has ended so pleasantly for all parties.

MRS. D. Good-day, Mr. Fendick. Thank you for the trouble you have taken.

FENDICK. Don't name it, ma'am. I congratulate you heartily, I assure you. (*Exit right.*)

SIR D. You must let me congratulate you too.

MRS. D. You think it is all ended? I'm free from this scandal at last?

SIR D. Yes. I have something to say to you.

MRS. D. Yes?

SIR D. Now that we may consider it over, I don't mind owning that at first I thought Mrs. Bulsom-Porter's tale was true.

MRS. D. But you don't now?! You believe in me? You think that I am worthy of Lionel?

SIR D. Yes, and it gives me the greatest pleasure, my dear Lucy, to welcome you into my family as my daughter.

(*He kisses her forehead. She bursts into a little fit of tears.*)

MRS. D. Oh! I can't help it! Don't look at me please.

SIR D. Cry away! Cry away! I'll go into the next room and send a little note to Bulsom-Porter. Between us I daresay we can put it all straight. (*Exit right.*)

MRS. D. (*Left alone, she clasps her hands in gratitude and breathes out*) I thank Thee! I thank Thee! All my life shall show my gratitude!

(*She continues sobbing. After some moments* SIR DANIEL *re-enters with an open sheet of note-paper on which he has begun to write a letter.*)

SIR D. By the way, my dear Lucy, I've been thinking——

(*She turns round and he sees she is still crying.*)

MRS. D. Isn't it foolish of me? This horrible thing has been hanging over me for weeks, and the relief seems too great. There! It's all over now! (*Looks up at him radiantly.*) Yes—you've been thinking—what?

SIR D. I've been thinking, Tawhampton is only six hours by rail——

MRS. D. Well?

SIR D. (*taking up her statement from table*). You lived there you say till you were fifteen?

MRS. D. Yes, and then my father and mother took me to Canada.

SIR D. You had no other home in your childhood?

MRS. D. No.

SIR D. Have you been there since your return to England?

MRS. D. No. It's an out-of-the-way place, and I've had no occasion to go.

SIR D. Some of your childhood's friends must be living there still?

MRS. D. Yes, I daresay.

SIR D. You shall go down there to-morrow, and hunt up some of your old friends who remember you as Lucy Allen.

MRS. D. Yes, that's a splendid idea. I hadn't thought of that.

SIR D. Who were your nearest neighbours?

MRS. D. There was Major Corfield; Mrs. Garton—of course, I was only a child when I left Tawhampton, and I didn't mix much with them.

SIR D. Who were the best families in the neighbourhood?

MRS. D. Lady Margaret Everden had a place

a few miles off, but we only knew her slightly. (*Cunningly*) Suppose I'm not able to find anybody at Tawhampton who can positively identify me, you have still sufficient evidence to prove who I am?

SIR D. I have no evidence whatever to prove who you are. I have Risby's and Fendick's evidence to prove that you are not Felicia Hindemarsh.

MRS. D. Isn't that enough?

SIR D. Not if the matter comes into court. We shall then need evidence to prove that you are Lucy Dane, *née* Allen, with a history that can be traced.

MRS. D. I see. This doesn't mean that I'm to be dragged all through this horrible scandal again?

SIR D. No. I think not. Bulsom-Porter is sure to meet the matter with an apology. Still, I think you should go to Tawhampton.

MRS. D. I'm quite willing.

SIR D. Did you keep up any correspondence with anyone there after you left?

MRS. D. Yes, for a little while, but it soon ceased.

SIR D. Whom did you write to?

MRS. D. The Mrs. Garton I spoke of was one——

SIR D. You don't know if she is living there still?

MRS. D. No. She was over sixty then——

SIR D. Do you remember anybody else? (*No reply.*) I have a topographical dictionary somewhere (*looking along bookshelves*). That might help us, if I can put my hands on it (*going along the bookshelves; she watches him furtively and with great anxiety*). It used to be somewhere on these shelves. I wonder what has become of it (*returning to his seat*). Who was the parson of the place?

MRS. D. There were several curates. Mr. Inskip; he was a very stout little man with spectacles; he would remember me, and Mr. Charlesworth——

SIR D. Have you any idea where either of them is to be found?

MRS. D. No.

SIR D. Who taught you? Did you go to school?

MRS. D. No. We had governesses.

SIR D. "We?" You say you were an only child. Who's "we?"

MRS. D. My cousin and I.

SIR D. Your cousin? (*Turns over the foolscap sheets.*) Your cousin? A girl?

MRS. D. Yes.

SIR D. (*running hastily over the sheets*). You haven't mentioned her. Where is she now?

MRS. D. I don't know. She left Tawhampton before I did.

SIR D. Where did she go?

MRS. D. She took a situation as governess, I think.

SIR D. Did she live with you in Tawhampton?

MRS. D. No. Her father lived in the village, and she used to come to our house to be taught.

SIR D. (*running over the notes*). You haven't mentioned her father?

MRS. D. No. I didn't see what he had to do with my story. He died before I left the village.

SIR D. What was your cousin's name?

MRS. D. (*after a slight pause*). Annie.

SIR D. Annie what?

MRS. D. Annie Allen.

SIR D. And you have completely lost sight of her?

MRS. D. Yes.

SIR D. About the governesses—what were their names?

MRS. D. Miss Fulks, Miss Longley, Miss Harrington——

SIR D. You don't know where either of them is now?

MRS. D. No. Are there any other questions you wish to ask me?

SIR D. No. I think not.

MRS. D. Then I'll go back home and rest. My head is ready to split. Thank you for believing in me. You know Lionel will be happy with me?

SIR D. I feel sure he will (*going with her to the door, right. As he comes to the door his eye lights on volumes of the topographical dictionary*). Ah! Here's the very thing.

MRS. D. What?

SIR D. (*taking a volume out of the shelf*). Topographical dictionary of England and Wales (*looking along the volumes*). Volume two, Devonshire. Let's see what it has to say about Tawhampton. (*Taking the volume to table and turning over the leaves—she watches him with great anxiety.*) Devonshire—Devonshire—Tawhampton—(*reading from the book*). Tawhampton is a parish and village—picturesquely situated —mid-division of the county—Wonford hundred —rural deanery of Crockenwell—Archdeaconry of Okestock. The church of Saint Andrew is a building in the Perpendicular style. The living is a vicarage, net yearly value £376, and has been held since eighteen-seventy-five by—(*turns round on her, she shows great fright*) by the Reverend Francis Hindemarsh! Hindemarsh?

MRS. D. He was my uncle.

SIR D. Your uncle?

MRS. D. Sir Daniel, I've done wrong, very wrong to hide from you that Felicia Hindemarsh was my cousin.

SIR D. Felicia Hindemarsh was your cousin?

MRS. D. Can't you understand why I have hidden it? The whole affair was so terrible! I can't tell you how keenly I felt the disgrace, how keenly I feel it still.

SIR D. But she was only your cousin. Surely there was no reason for you to hide it from Lionel and me.

MRS. D. I didn't intend to hide it from you. But I had always concealed it from everybody. And having once begun I was obliged to go on. Can't you understand?

(He doesn't reply. His face shows very grave concern, and he again walks up and down as if in perplexity as to what course he should take.)

MRS. D. (*after a considerable pause*). You're angry with me?

SIR D. Not angry. But grieved, deeply grieved that you hadn't the courage to tell me the truth.

MRS. D. I will now—the whole truth—indeed, I will.

SIR D. (*drily*). Yes. Perhaps it would be advisable.

(*He is still evidently distressed and annoyed; at length goes up to writing-table, takes up the foolscap sheets, glances through them.*)

SIR D. Of course this puts the matter in a new light.

MRS. D. How? I'll tell Lionel. Promise me it sha'n't part us!

SIR D. There is no reason you should be parted because you happen to be the cousin of Felicia Hindemarsh. But——

MRS. D. But what?

SIR D. Why didn't you deal openly with us? See how Lionel loves you! How he believes in you! And I had grown to like you. I felt glad that you were going to be my daughter. Ah, why didn't you trust us?

MRS. D. Oh, I've done wrong, very wrong! Say that it sha'n't part us. You forgive me?

SIR D. (*after pause offers his hand, which she takes eagerly*). I forgive you. But you wish me to clear you thoroughly from this slander?

MRS. D. Yes, indeed. And you will?

SIR D. Yes. But understand, my dear Lucy, from this moment there must not be the faintest suspicion of trifling with the truth. Understand that most clearly.

MRS. D. I do.

SIR D. Then we'll consider that episode closed, and we'll make a fresh start.

MRS. D. Yes, ask me anything you please. I'm only too anxious to help you in getting at the truth.

SIR D. That ought not to be very difficult. (*Seats himself in revolving chair at writing-table, takes a pen and occasionally makes notes of her answers.*) Now, Felicia Hindemarsh was your cousin?

MRS. D. Yes.

SIR D. Her father was the vicar of Tawhampton?

MRS. D. Yes.

SIR D. And your other cousin—Annie Allen?

MRS. D. I had no other cousin. When you asked what my cousin's name was I couldn't say "Felicia Hindemarsh," so I gave the first name I could think of.

SIR D. Had you any other relatives in or near Tawhampton?

MRS. D. No.

SIR D. You were the only child of—(*consulting foolscap sheets*) of Robert and Sophia Allen?

MRS. D. Yes, my mother and her mother were sisters.

SIR D. (*reading from foolscap*). Robert Allen, woollen manufacturer, Tawhampton. In eighty-seven, being in difficulties, he sold his business

and went to Montreal. You, his only child, went with him, and five years later you married Charles Lewis Dane, surgeon, Montreal. You lived there till two years ago when your husband died, and a year ago you came back to England, and took up your residence at Winchester.

MRS. D. Yes.

SIR D. There are, of course, people in Montreal who knew you intimately as Mrs. Dane, and can identify you?

MRS. D. Oh, yes, of course.

SIR D. Will you please make me out a list of their names and addresses?

MRS. D. Yes, certainly. Shall I do it now?

(*Half rising to go.*)

SIR D. No, by-and-by will do. Now to go back to your cousin, Felicia Hindemarsh. You have no idea where she is now?

MRS. D. Not the least.

SIR D. When was the last time you saw her?

MRS. D. When I left Tawhampton.

SIR D. You haven't seen her since?

MRS. D. No. Sir Daniel, I feel I could collect my thoughts much better if I were alone and had time to remember. I feel so confused——

SIR D. I'll try not to tax you, if you'll answer one or two simple questions.

MRS. D. Very well. You won't think I'm try-

ing to deceive you if I don't remember every little fact?

SIR D. You will remember all that I require to know. Felicia Hindemarsh was younger or older than you?

MRS. D. A year younger.

SIR D. Have you any portrait of her?

MRS. D. No.

SIR D. You kept up a correspondence with her when you left England?

MRS. D. (*after a little pause*). Yes.

SIR D. For how long?

MRS. D. For some years, I think.

SIR D. Have you any letter of hers?

MRS. D. No. After the dreadful affair in Vienna I destroyed everything.

SIR D. There would doubtless be persons in Tawhampton who would remember her, as well as you?

MRS. D. Oh, yes, I should think. We only lived there as girls, and perhaps people might not recollect sufficiently to be sure——

SIR D. When Felicia Hindemarsh left Tawhampton, where did she go?

MRS. D. I don't quite know.

SIR D. But you had letters from her. Where did they come from?

MRS. D. Let me think—it was some seaside place I think. (*Pause.*)

SIR D. You don't remember?

MRS. D. No. I'm getting so terribly muddled, I don't know what I'm saying. I—I—you frighten me!

SIR D. I frighten you?

(*His manner throughout has been calm and kind but very firm.*)

MRS. D. Yes. I know you're very kind, and that I've nothing to fear, but I feel—I feel as if I were being thumb-screwed, and if you ask me one more question I must shriek out for help. (*A little pause.*) I'm sure it would be better for me to go and write it all out when I'm alone (*making a movement to go*). Don't you think so?

SIR D. (*arresting her with a gesture*). No.

MRS. D. I'm in such a state that I can't be sure I'm giving you the right answers.

SIR D. (*calm, stern*). You must be sure you are giving me the right answers. Come, now, sit down, and (*very kindly*) remember that I have not a single interest at stake except what is yours and Lionel's. Remember that I have no hope or desire in this matter, except to clear you triumphantly in the eyes of the world, and give you to Lionel for his wife. Now don't get anxious or excited. We'll soon get this tiresome business over!

MRS. D. Oh, I know I'm foolish, and you have been so patient and kind.

SIR D. This seaside place that Felicia Hindemarsh wrote from? Was it north, south, east, or west?

MRS. D. South, I think.

SIR D. Portsmouth, Brighton, Hastings, Eastbourne?

MRS. D. Brighton, I think.

SIR D. What was she doing there? (*No reply.*) You said your cousin was a governess?

MRS. D. I think she was pupil teacher at a school.

SIR D. (*making a note*). Good. That's a clue.

MRS. D. (*showing great fright as he turns from her*). A clue to what?

SIR D. If Felicia Hindemarsh was a pupil teacher at a school on the south coast, we shall doubtless be able to find out where it was, and some one who remembers her.

MRS. D. Yes. Yes. But I hope I shall find somebody at Tawhampton to-morrow——

SIR D. Yes. By the way, I'm free to-morrow, I think I'll run down to Tawhampton with you?

MRS. D. (*feigning delight*). Will you? That will be such a help to me. You can tell me exactly what kind of evidence you want, and you can be sure whether people are telling the truth.

SIR D. Can I? (*Looking at her.*)

MRS. D. (*looking at him with the utmost frank-*

ness). I know that I shouldn't like to tell you what was false. I should feel sure that you would very soon drag the truth out of me. See how quickly you forced me to tell you that Felicia Hindemarsh was my cousin. And I'm glad you did! I should never have been happy or comfortable till I had told you and Lionel. Then you will go down to Tawhampton with me?

SIR D. (*Has been keenly watching her.*) If you don't mind.

MRS. D. I shall be delighted. I hope my head will be better, and that I shall be well enough to go.

SIR D. I hope so. If not, I'll take a little journey there by myself.

MRS. D. Ye-es——

SIR D. Was your cousin anything like you?

MRS. D. I think there was a likeness. I daresay it was that which made Mr. Risby mistake me for her.

SIR D. Possibly. But Mr. Fendick said the other day that you were not in the least like Felicia Hindemarsh.

MRS. D. Did he? But one person often sees a likeness where another sees none. What time shall we start for Tawhampton to-morrow?

SIR D. I'll look out the trains by-and-by. . . Then you never saw your cousin after childhood?

MRS. D. No—I—I (*suddenly breaks down*). I can't bear it! I can't bear it!

SIR D. What?

MRS. D. Your questioning me as if I was guilty! I feel you suspect me still. Tell me, do you trust me thoroughly? (*He does not reply.*) Ah, you see you do not answer!—So be it. Make me out a list of the questions you want answered and I'll answer them. But I can endure this torture no longer. (*Going to door.*)

SIR D. Come, my dear Lucy, this won't do. (*Takes her gently back.*) We are here to get at the truth, aren't we?

MRS. D. Yes, and you must see how ready and willing I am to answer your questions—I'm very faint——

SIR D. I'll only keep you a moment. Now I am going to ask you one question. Think well before you reply, because all your happiness and Lionel's depend upon my receiving a correct answer.

MRS. D. Well?!

SIR D. When was the last time you saw your cousin Felicia Hindemarsh? (*A long pause.*)

MRS. D. I'll tell you everything.

SIR D. Go on.

MRS. D. I don't know what you'll think of me. I don't care. I'd almost rather everybody believed

me guilty than suffer what I have done the last few weeks. It's horrible!

SIR D. When was the last time you saw Felicia Hindemarsh?

MRS. D. After the fearful scandal in Vienna she wrote to me in Montreal. She was desperate and begged us to shelter her. We had been like sisters, and I wrote to her to come out to us, and we would give her a home.

SIR D. And you did?

MRS. D. Yes, till her death.

SIR D. When was that?

MRS. D. About a year ago.

SIR D. Where? (*Pause.*)

MRS. D. At Montreal.

SIR D. She lived with you in Montreal—as Felicia Hindemarsh?

MRS. D. No; we called her Mrs. Allen.

SIR D. Give me the names and addresses of those people who knew you in Montreal as Mrs. Dane, and her as Mrs. Allen.

MRS. D. I'll write them out. Let me bring it to you this evening. What are you going to do with it?

SIR D. I'm going to prove that you are Lucy Dane—*if you are Lucy Dane.*

(*She looks at him.*)

SIR D. Does Risby know who you are?

MRS. D. What do you mean?

SIR D. Does Risby know who you are?

MRS. D. Yes—he knows that I am Mrs. Dane.

SIR D. The cousin of Felicia Hindemarsh.

MRS. D. (*after a pause*). Yes

SIR D. You told Risby, a mere acquaintance, that Felicia Hindemarsh was your cousin, and you didn't tell Lionel, you didn't tell me?

MRS. D. I—I—— (*she looks at him*). I—oh—I'll answer you no more. Believe what you please of me! I want no more of your help! Let me go!

SIR D. (*stopping her*). How much does Risby know?

MRS. D. Don't I tell you he knows I am Mrs. Dane?

SIR D. Woman, you're lying!

MRS. D. (*flashes out on him*). How dare you? How dare you? (*Stands confronting him.*)

SIR D. (*looking straight at her*). I say you're lying! You are Felicia Hindemarsh!

(*He looks at her steadily. Her eyes drop. She sinks on her knees before him, seizes his hand in supplication, looks at him appealingly; he angrily withdraws his hand.*)

MRS. D. Don't tell Lionel!

SIR D. (*with a little laugh*). Not tell Lionel?

MRS. D. (*Dry, quiet voice.*) I'm not a bad

woman. You don't know. You wouldn't condemn me if you knew all.

SIR D. Tell me.

MRS. D. I'd been brought up in a village. I was a child in knowledge. I knew nothing of life, nothing of the world. Mr. Trent was very kind to me. He was rich and distinguished and flattered me by his notice. And I—oh, why didn't somebody warn me? Why did they keep me ignorant? I didn't even love him, not in that way —not as I love Lionel. I tell you I knew nothing! Nothing! Till it was too late! You believe me, don't you?

SIR D. Tell me all.

MRS. D. I hated myself. I should have hated him, but he was very kind. It went on till all was discovered. His wife killed herself. He was frantic with grief and went out of his mind. I thought I'd kill myself—I did buy the poison—but I hadn't the courage. My cousin Lucy was living in Montreal. She was an angel—she took me into her home and gave out that I was a widow. My child was born there.

SIR D. There was a child?

MRS. D. Yes.

SIR D. Is it living?

MRS. D. Yes.

SIR D. Where is it?

MRS. D. In North Devon, with an old servant

of ours. I see him every month. He's the sweetest boy, and I love him so much—next to Lionel. He'll never be any trouble—or disgrace. Now you know everything. I'm not a bad woman.

SIR D. I'm sorry for you, believe me, very sorry. But why did you wade through all that morass of lies and deceit? Why didn't you have the courage to tell me the truth?

MRS. D. Because I felt that you would part me from Lionel. If you loved a woman as I love him, wouldn't you tell lies, wouldn't you dare anything, to keep her? You know you would! You know you would! And so did I, and I'd do it again. You won't tell Lionel?

SIR D. He must be told. And this marriage must be broken off.

MRS. D. Why? Nobody need know. Mr. Risby won't betray me. The detective can't. I've paid him and he daren't. You won't tell Lionel?

SIR D. He must be told.

MRS. D. It can be hushed up. I'll make him such a good wife. Give me this one chance—don't tell him. Give me this one chance!

SIR D. He must be told.

Enter LIONEL *at door, very excited.*

LAL. Lucy, I went for the keys; they weren't there. The escritoire was locked. Just as I was

coming away Risby came up with a note for you. While he was talking at the door with the maid, she said something about his having called upon you this morning before lunch. Was that so? You met him here as if you hadn't seen him. I couldn't understand it—I've been questioning him all this time, but he only puts me off. He says I must ask you——

MRS. D. (*to* SIR DANIEL). Tell him.

Enter LADY EASTNEY.

LADY E. Well, how is it going? Have you got all the evidence you want?

MRS. D. Will you come home with me? I wish to speak to you.

LADY E. What's the matter?

MRS. D. Come home with me.

LADY E. What has happened?

MRS. D. I want a friend. Don't be hard on me! Don't be hard on me!

(*Exit* MRS. DANE, *right, followed by* LADY EASTNEY. LIONEL *is going after them.* SIR DANIEL *snatches his arm, and holds him firmly.*)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE—The same as Act III. Time, the following Saturday evening. Windows open. Discover LAL, very haggard and restless, walking up and down. Enter WILSON at door, goes over to window, stops.

WILSON. Sir Daniel has finished dinner, sir.

(*No reply.*)

(*Exit* WILSON *at window, returns in a few moments bringing in a rug and a light garden chair, which he leaves in the bow of window; he folds the rug and places it on arm of sofa.*)

Shall I keep any dinner for you, sir?

LAL. Eh—no thank you, Wilson.

(*Exit* WILSON *at door.* LAL *comes down to sofa and sits in a despairing attitude.*)

Enter JANET *at door in evening dress—at first she does not see him.*

JANET. I beg pardon.

LAL. Janet—you wish to see my father?

JANET. No, I've just left him. Auntie and I have been dining here.

LAL. Oh yes. I'd forgotten.

JANET. We wondered what had become of you. Why didn't you come in to dinner?

LAL. I'm not fit for any company but my own.

JANET. Sir Daniel and Auntie are taking coffee in the veranda. Won't you come and join them?

LAL. I'd rather not. Please don't take any notice of me.

(*She is going off at door—he sits down again in despair—she suddenly stops; comes back to him.*)

JANET. Mr. Carteret, I don't know what has happened. But I can see there's something the matter with you. Perhaps you've had a great sorrow. Well, you'll pull yourself together and be a man. It'll tak you all your time, I've nae doubt, but you've just got to do it, d'ye understand?

LAL. I'll try.

JANET. And you needn't think that you're the only poor body on earth that's badly used. For if ye did but know there's many a man, and many a wee bit of a woman that has just as thankless a lot as yours. So I'd not be wasting too much pity on myself if I were you.

LAL. I won't, Janet.

JANET. And if you've lost one friend, perhaps that may be the very means of showing you the value of them that are left.

Enter LADY EASTNEY, *at door, in dinner dress.*

JANET. I've just been giving him the very best advice in the world. (*Goes to window.*)

LADY E. How d'ye do, Lionel?

LAL. How d'ye do, Lady Eastney?

LADY E. (*comes very tenderly and sympathetically to him, takes both hands of his in hers, looks at him, shakes her head at him*). No sleep again? No appetite?

LAL. (*withdraws his hands*). I can't eat. And I feel I shall never sleep again.

LADY E. Your father is grieving very much about you.

LAL. I'm sorry, for there never was anybody less worth grieving about than I am.

LADY E. Go to him. Try and eat something just to please him.

LAL. It would choke me. Don't bother any more about me, Lady Eastney. I daresay I shall get over it by the time I'm dead.

(*Going off at window.*)

LADY E. Lionel! (*He stops. In a low tone*) You've not seen her since——

LAL. No, I've kept my word, and broken my

heart. I heard the clock chime every quarter of an hour last night. I feel I should like to lie at the bottom of the river to-night where I couldn't hear it. (*Going off at window.*)

LADY E. Lionel, where are you going?

LAL. Does it matter where I go, or what becomes of me?

JANET (*trying to stop him*). Mr. Carteret——

LAL. Let me be, Janet!

(*Going off at window.*)

LADY E. Lionel! you won't do anything rash?

LAL (*at window*). You needn't fear I shall kill myself. I'm too much of a coward. But—tell my father I can keep my promise no longer. I'm going across to her. (*Exit at window.*)

JANET (*bursts into tears and throws her arms around* LADY EASTNEY'S *neck*). Auntie, I can just bear it no longer! My heart will break! Let Mrs. Patterson take me away—anything—anything—so that I can be at work and forget!

LADY E. Hush, hush, my dickey! You mustn't be a coward!

Enter SIR DANIEL *at door.* JANET *dries her tears.*

LADY E. There! There's a brave Janet.

JANET. I'm just a poor silly body that ought to know better!

(SIR DANIEL *passes his hand caressingly over her head.*)

LADY E. Janet, would you go home and look in my dressing-table? You'll find a sleeping powder in the second drawer——

JANET. Yes, I know.

LADY E. Bring it to me here.

JANET. Yes, Auntie. (*Exit, right.*)

LADY E. We must manage to give Lionel a little sleep to-night. He's nearly distracted for want of it.

SIR D. Poor boy! I'm rather glad he has taken it so violently.

LADY E. Why?

SIR D. It means that in six months it will be out of his system.

LADY E. It's a genuine love. Don't you think it will last?

SIR D. A few months. But even if it goes deeper than I think it does, it must be broken off.

LADY E. Why? Nobody except ourselves need know that this story is true.

SIR D. The Bulsom-Porters know it—the whole neighbourhood must know it before long.

LADY E. The Bulsom-Porters think that Mr. Risby was really mistaken. The Canon has them to dinner to-night, and he's doing his best to get her to sign the apology you drew up.

SIR D. We can't ask Mrs. Bulsom-Porter for an apology now!

LADY E. Indeed we can. Whatever happens

to Mrs. Dane, I'm quite determined Mrs. Bulsom-Porter shall make a handsome apology, and everybody shall know it; then I don't think the story will ever be repeated.

SIR D. And will Mrs. Dane continue to live in Sunningwater?

LADY E. She's quite willing to do whatever you and Lionel wish. I've been with her all the afternoon. Oh, the pearls of wisdom and good advice that dropped from this small mouth! And I felt myself such a transcendent humbug all the while!

SIR D. Why?

LADY E. Aren't we all humbugs? Isn't it all a sham? Don't we all have one code on our lips and another in our hearts, one set of rules to admonish our neighbours, and another to guide our own conduct? Why should I lecture that poor woman on her duty to Society? Why should I take her name off my visiting list, and pretend that I can't know her?

SIR D. Because you're a virtuous woman, and she's not.

LADY E. That's true—as it happens—and so far as it goes. Small credit to me! I wasn't in her place—I didn't meet with her temptations—and if I had I should have been cold-hearted enough, or cunning enough to resist.

SIR D. Very well. That's all a man can ask;

the temperament—call it virtue or cunning—that resists.

LADY E. Not a pretty kind of cunning, that! And sometimes the man gets the other kind of cunning—the cunning that conceals!

SIR D. Very well. We can't help ourselves. But at any rate the outside of the platter must be clean.

LADY E. Oh, aren't you Pharisees and tyrants, all of you? And don't you make cowards and hypocrites of all of us? Don't you lead us into sin, and then condemn us for it? Aren't you first our partners, and then our judges?

SIR D. The rules of the game are severe. If you don't like them, leave the sport alone. They will never be altered.

LADY E. But where's the justice of the whole business? Here is this poor woman whom Lionel loves, and who loves Lionel with all her heart—why shouldn't he marry her?

SIR D. If he were your son would you wish him to marry her? Would you wish all his after-life to be poisoned by the thought that she had deceived him, that she had belonged to another man, and that man and his child still living? Wouldn't you wish your boy to have the love of a girl who could give him all herself? Do, for heaven's sake, let us get rid of all this sentimental cant and sophistry about this woman-business

(*unconsciously getting very heated*). A man demands the treasure of a woman's purest love. It's what he buys and pays for with the strength of his arm and the sweat of his brow. It's the condition on which he makes her his wife and fights the world for her and his children. It's his fiercest instinct, and he does well to guard it; for it's the very mainspring of a nation's health and soundness. And whatever I've done, whatever I've been myself, I'm quite resolved my son sha'n't marry another man's mistress. There's the plain sense of the whole matter, so let us have no more talk about patching up things that ought not to be patched up, that can't be patched up, and that sha'n't be patched up if I can stop them from being patched up!

LADY E. (*Looks at him very much amused.*) I wouldn't get into a temper about it if I were you.

SIR D. Am I in a temper? Pray forgive me.

LADY E. I rather like you in a temper. It shows me that if I marry you, you'd be my master.

SIR D. Let me assure you I'd try. Will you take me?

LADY E. Couldn't you manage to put a little of the fervour you waste on social ethics into your love-making?

SIR D. I'll try. Will you take me?

LADY E. (*pauses, looks at him merrily*). I'm really half inclined——

Enter WILSON *at door.*

WILSON. Canon Bonsey would like to speak to you for a moment, Sir Daniel.

SIR D. Show him in. (*Exit* WILSON.)

LADY E. He has come from the Bulsom-Porters. Now remember that we can't go back from the position we have taken up—the fullest apology.

Enter WILSON *showing in* CANON BONSEY.

WILSON (*announcing*). Canon Bonsey.

Enter CANON. *Exit* WILSON.

CANON. How d'ye do, Sir Daniel? How d'ye do, Lady Eastney?

LADY E. (*shaking hands*). How d'ye do, Canon?

CANON (*making a wry face*). I've had the Bulsom-Porters to dinner. And seeing that Bulsom-Porter knows a glass of good wine I felt bound to bring out my elegant eighty-nine Ayala and my sixty-three port. I cannot imagine a more unworthy office for either vintage than that of assisting Mrs. Bulsom-Porter's digestion. However, I've persuaded her to go home and fetch

the apology you drew up last Wednesday. They're coming on here, and I think, with a little judicious handling, we shall persuade the lady to sign it. Don't I hear voices? (*Goes to the window.*) They're coming. Eh? (*looks very grave and shocked*). They're quarreling in the lane. I heard an ejaculation from Bulsom-Porter which ill accords with the sylvan beauty of the scene. What?! (*Exit quickly at window.*)

SIR D. Take care how you work this apology business. Suppose Mrs. Bulsom-Porter finds out that we know Mrs. Dane is an impostor?

LADY E. We don't know it. Mr. Risby and the detective say she isn't. I intend that Mrs. Dane shall leave this place, if she does leave it, without a stain on her character. And I intend that Mrs. Bulsom-Porter shall stay in it, if she does stay in it, as a self-confessed scandal-monger.

SIR D. But I can't exact an apology——

LADY E. (*very firmly*). I can! Hush!

(*As the* CANON *appears at window.*)

CANON *enters at window leading in* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *very carefully.* BULSOM-PORTER *follows.* BULSOM-PORTER *and* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *are evidently in a bad temper with each other.*

CANON. Take care of the window-threshold.

Perhaps Sir Daniel will excuse us entering this way?

SIR D. Certainly. (*To* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER, *shaking hands*) How d'ye do?

MRS. BUL.-P. How d'ye do, Sir Daniel?

SIR D. How d'ye do?

(*To* BULSOM-PORTER. BULSOM-PORTER *says nothing, but shakes hands, glances at* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER. SIR DANIEL *gives a sympathetic hand-shake behind the back of* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER, *who is exchanging a constrained bow with* LADY EASTNEY.)

CANON (*to* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER). Did you bring the paper?

MRS. BUL.-P. (*produces the paper that* SIR DANIEL *has given her at the end of Act II*). I shall not sign this.

CANON (*taken aback*). But, my dear lady, I understood you at dinner to say that you would sign it.

MRS. BUL.-P. Yes. But since dinner, Mr. Bulsom-Porter has chosen to use such dreadful language to me, that I must first of all insist upon an apology from him.

(CANON *turns helplessly to* BULSOM-PORTER.)

BUL.-P. Tell her to kindly send in a form to Rawlinson, my lawyer, and I'll sign it.

CANON. Hush! (*Turns to* MRS. BULSOM-

PORTER.) Mr. Bulsom-Porter is only too anxious to withdraw his language to you, as I am sure you are only too anxious to withdraw your allegations against Mrs. Dane.

MRS. BUL.-P. I object to the word "allegations." I made certain statements——

CANON. "Statements," by all means. Which you are anxious to withdraw.

MRS. BUL.-P. I object to the word "withdraw."

CANON. Which you will not repeat.

MRS. BUL.-P. Which will not be repeated. The word "apologize" is used in this paper. I cannot apologize to Mrs. Dane. I would rather go to gaol.

(CANON *goes to* BULSOM-PORTER.)

BUL.-P. (*in a low tone, but sufficiently loud for his wife to hear*). Kindly arrange a settlement on that basis.

CANON (*tries to sooth her*). Hush! (*To* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER). You will not apologize. I suppose you would not mind expressing your regret?

MRS. BUL.-P. I do not mind some slight expression of regret, but I will never apologize.

CANON (*helpless*). Sir Daniel, what do you advise under the circumstances?

SIR D. (*looks at* LADY EASTNEY). Well, I—a——

LADY E. Mrs. Bulsom-Porter, will you please allow me to look at that paper? (MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *gives paper to* LADY EASTNEY, *who reads it.* CANON, SIR DANIEL, *and* BULSOM-PORTER *talk apart.*

LADY E. (*having read*). I'm surprised!

MRS. BUL.-P. At what?

LADY E. At Sir Daniel's moderation. (SIR DANIEL *makes a face.*) I don't think you quite realize the very awkward position you are in.

MRS. BUL.-P. How?

LADY E. (*to* BULSOM-PORTER). You thoroughly approve of this?

BUL.-P. Most certainly.

LADY E. Sir Daniel, what would happen if Mr. Bulsom-Porter were to instruct his lawyer to offer his own apologies to Mrs. Dane, at the same time declaring that he wouldn't hold himself responsible for what Mrs. Bulsom-Porter does or says?

SIR D. Well, a—I scarcely know.

MRS. BUL.-P. I shall not be bound by my husband's actions.

LADY E. Isn't it whether he will be bound by yours? The only question is as to how far Mr. Bulsom-Porter is prepared to go——

BUL.-P. My dear Lady Eastney, I am prepared to go to any lengths. I will offer Mrs. Dane the most abject apology on my knees, and I

will allow her lawyer to dictate it in any terms, and make any use of it that he pleases.

LADY E. I think that will meet our views, Sir Daniel?

SIR D. Yes, yes. I think so——

LADY E. Mrs. Dane will then bring her action against Mrs. Bulsom-Porter?

SIR D. Yes, I suppose so——

MRS. BUL.-P. Action against me?!

LADY E. And call Mr. Bulsom-Porter for a witness——

MRS. BUL.-P. What? My husband will not dare——

BUL.-P. My dear, I shall!

LADY E. I suppose there is no doubt whatever of the effect upon the jury, Sir Daniel?

SIR D. None whatever, I should say—or upon the judge.

LADY E. (*to* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER). Don't you see what a very awkward position you are in? Mr. Bulsom-Porter, will you step across to Mrs. Dane's with me at once?

BUL.-P. Delighted.

LADY E. (*to* BULSOM-PORTER). My cloak is in the next room. (*Going off at door.*)

MRS. BUL.-P. One moment! I do not object to sign this if Sir Daniel will remove the word "apology."

LADY E. It must be signed exactly as it stands.

MRS. BUL.-P. No! I will do anything that Sir Daniel may require, but I will never apologize.

LADY E. Now, Mr. Bulsom-Porter——

MRS. BUL.-P. One moment, please. (*Very long pause.*) Sir Daniel, if I had to sign this—agreement, where should I have to put my name?

SIR D. (*pointing*). There.

LADY E. (*takes up a pen from writing-table*). Do you like a broad nib? Or a quill?

MRS. BUL.-P. Neither.

LADY E. (*takes up another*). This seems a nice one.

(MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *takes it after great hesitation, at last dashes off the signature and bursts into a fit of hysterical tears.*)

LADY E. (*offering pen*). Canon will you sign as witness?

CANON. Certainly. (*Signs.*)

LADY E. And I will put my autograph, and then the interesting document will be complete. (*Signs.*)

CANON. And peace will be restored to my distracted parish.

MRS. BUL.-P. (*getting more and more hysterical*). If any future question arises, I wish it to be distinctly understood that my signature was forced from me, against my will, and under threats from my husband—and—I'm quite sure

Jim Risby knows something dreadful about that woman—and if my husband had the least sense of what was due to his wife—I—understand—I do not apologize. I have not, and I never will apologize, and, oh—(*to* BULSOM-PORTER). Let me pass, sir!

(*Exit in hysterics at the window. Pause.*)

BUL.-P. (*very quietly*). It's my silver wedding on the twentieth of next month.

CANON (*to* BULSOM-PORTER). Mrs. Bulsom-Porter seemed very much upset. Oughtn't one of us attend her home?

BUL.-P. Well, perhaps, you will.

(CANON *goes up to window—stops, comes back.*)

CANON. Perhaps we had better both go. Are you ready?

BUL.-P. (*shrugs his shoulder*). I shall be there before Mrs. Bulsom-Porter has recovered. Good-night, Sir Daniel. My very best thanks. Good-night, my dear Lady Eastney, you have saved me from a law-suit and a thousand pounds damages.

LADY E. Don't mention it. Good-night.

BUL.-P. Now, Canon!

(*Goes to window, takes out cigar and lights it at window.*)

CANON. Good-night, Sir Daniel.

SIR D. Good-night, my dear Canon.

CANON. Good-night, dear Lady Eastney.

LADY E. (*shaking hands*). Good-night, Canon.

CANON. Give my kindest regards to Mrs. Dane. Of course she will take the stall at the bazaar. And I'll bring the Duchess to call upon her one day next week.

(*Exit after* BULSOM-PORTER *at window.*)

SIR D. Did you hear that?

LADY E. Yes. I must persuade Mrs. Dane to go away for a few months.

SIR D. And then?

LADY E. I do want to save Mrs. Dane. How can I?

SIR D. Impossible. The thing can't be patched up. It ought not to be patched up.

LADY E. What is to be done?

SIR D. We must get Lal away from her; take him out to Egypt; give him some work; throw him into young society, and trust to time and his healthy instincts to bring him round.

LADY E. I suppose you are right. But in any case I'll give Mrs. Dane this certificate of character from Mrs. Bulsom-Porter.

(*Taking up the paper which* MRS. BULSOM-PORTER *has signed*).

Enter JANET *at door with evening cloak over her dress.*

JANET. Here's the sleeping powder, Auntie. Will you be coming home now?

(LADY EASTNEY *takes sleeping powder.*)

LADY E. In a little while, darling (*passing her hand caressingly over* JANET'S *forehead*). Why, how hot and feverish your forehead is. Go and sit under the cedars till I'm ready.

(*Taking* JANET *towards window; they both stop;* JANET *hides her head on* LADY EASTNEY'S *shoulders;* LADY EASTNEY *takes her off at door as* LAL *enters at window.*)

LAL. I've broken my word. I've seen her. I've asked her to come over here and see you. You won't refuse to receive her?

SIR D. No. I wish to see her.

LAL. I'll fetch her—— (*Going off.*)

SIR D. Stay. Lal, this must end. You must give her up.

LAL. I can't! I won't! Why should I? She was sinned against, not sinning. She was ignorant! She knew no better!

SIR D. Get rid of that sorry cant, my lad. Every girl of fifteen knows black from white, knows her right hand from her left, knows that if she lets some plausible scoundrel rob her of her jewel, she'll by-and-by come a beggared bride to a cheated bridegroom!

LAL. I don't care! I love her! And I shall never be happy with anybody else.

SIR D. Do you think you'll be happy with her when the first burst of passion is over? Don't you think you'll begin to remember that she has deceived you, hoodwinked you, that her lover is now living, that his child is now living. Remember! You haven't had all her love! She loved and gave herself away before she knew you——

(LAL, *mad with resentment, raises both arms as if he would strike* SIR DANIEL.)

SIR D. Ah! that stabs you, does it? Don't you think that same thought will come and stab you continually? Say in a few years some good-looking friend comes along and is civil to her. She's civil to him. You'll begin to wonder how far it has gone; you'll remember that she can deceive; you won't be sure; you'll question her; she'll reassure you; she'll swear and re-swear and swear again, but you'll never be certain; you may be wronging her but——she may be wronging you. You'll never know. All that you'll know is, "She can lie; she lied to me; she lied to my father; she lied to all of us; she lied, and lied, and lied,—is she lying to me now?" And you'll never know. Your life will be a very hell to you.

LAL. So be it! Hell with her, rather than heaven with any other woman!

SIR D. Nonsense! Pull yourself together! Put all your heart and soul into your work. You'll have an awful three months, an awful six months perhaps. But you'll conquer yourself. You'll be a better and stronger and braver man all your life for it. Love isn't the only thing on earth. It oughtn't always to be the first——

LAL. Ah, you can talk! You've never been in love.

SIR D. You think that?

LAL. You've never loved a woman as I love her and then had to give her up.

SIR D. (*very tenderly and impressively*). My boy, I loved one woman when you were a child—ah, I did love her—you don't know what love is, if you compare your hot boyish passion of a few weeks with my deep love of years—there's no comparing love. I gave her up; we gave each other up; it broke our hearts but we did it—her son doesn't blush when he remembers her—you and I have stood by her grave together——

LAL (*startled*). Sir!

(*Looks at* SIR DANIEL.)

SIR D. Do you think I'd deny her son anything? Don't you think I'd give all I have in the world to make him happy? And when I ask him to renounce an unworthy love, a love that will by-and-by bring him to misery—(*a cry of anguish from* LAL). You'll do it, Lal! I'm not asking

you to do what I haven't done myself! You'll do it?

LAL. Yes, sir.

(*A warm handshake.* MRS. DANE *appears at the window with a face of despair. She is unseen by* LAL, *but* SIR DANIEL *sees her and makes her a motion; she withdraws*).

SIR D. Let me say good-bye for you.

LAL. Mustn't I see her?

SIR D. It will be better not.

LAL. You'll be very kind to her?

SIR D. She shall find me the truest and best of friends to her and her child. Go into the other room—Lady Eastney is there. I think she has something for you.

LAL. Be very gentle to her——

(SIR DANIEL *reassures him with a look and a grasp of the hand. Exit* LAL *at door.*)

SIR DANIEL *goes to window.* MRS. DANE *enters.*

SIR D. What have you heard?

MRS. D. Enough. You mean to part us then?

SIR D. It is not I who will part you.

MRS. D. Who will, then?

SIR D. Yourself. You wish him to be happy?

MRS. D. I have no other wish in the world.

SIR D. I believe that if you hold up your fin-

ger and beckon him he will come to you from the end of the world and marry you.

MRS. D. (*delighted*). Ah!

SIR D. What does that mean? He is on the threshold of a fine career; devoted to his work, with a large circle of friends. If you become his wife, will you tell them your history? They will all fall away from you. Will you hide it? That's impossible. He loves you now, but in a few years' time—dare you put his love to such a test? Dare you marry him knowing that day by day he must help you deceive till disclosure comes; and then, day by day, he must endure social isolation *with* you, disorder and failure in his career *for* you—dare you marry him? Will it be for your own happiness?

MRS. D. My happiness! What does that matter? Tell me what is best for him?

SIR D. Don't you know what is best for him?

(*A long pause.*)

MRS. D. So be it! Say "Good-bye" to him for me.

Enter LADY EASTNEY *at door, bringing cloak on her arm.*

LADY E. I've something for you.

(*Taking the paper from her pocket, and giving it to* MRS. DANE.)

MRS. D. (*takes the paper, reads it, smiles very bitterly*). Thank you.

LADY E. What have you decided to do?

MRS. D. I'm going to Devonshire to-morrow. I shall make a long stay there. I sha'n't let him know where I am. How is he now?

LADY E. He's quieter. I've persuaded him to take a mouthful of food and some wine. I put a strong sleeping powder in the wine, so he'll sleep to-night, poor fellow.

MRS. D. He'll sleep to-night, poor fellow. Tell him about my going away when you think he can bear it. I needn't stay, need I? Thank you for this—(*referring to paper*) but what's the use of it?

LADY E. Mrs. Bulsom-Porter daren't attack your reputation now.

MRS. D. Reputation? Reputation isn't much, is it, when love has gone. Don't think I'm ungrateful to you—(*tearing it*) but I sha'n't trouble to defend my reputation. Good-bye, Sir Daniel. Don't you think the world is very hard on a woman?

SIR D. It isn't the world that's hard. It isn't men and women. Am I hard? Call on me at any time, and you shall find me the truest friend to you and yours. Is Lady Eastney hard? She has been fighting all the week to save you.

MRS. D. Then who is it, what is it, drives me out?

SIR D. The law, the hard law that we didn't make, that we would break if we could, for we are all sinners at heart—the law that is above us all, made for us all, that we can't escape from, that we must keep or perish.

MRS. D. Won't it do if we pretend to keep it, and force our neighbours to keep it instead?

SIR D. Even that shows that we own the law.

MRS. D. Only we mustn't get found out. I'm afraid I've broken that part of the law. Good-bye, Sir Daniel.

SIR D. I'll see you across to your home.

MRS. D. No, I'd rather you didn't. Just put me outside your palings and then I'll find my way. Good-bye, Lady Eastney.

LADY E. Good-bye (*shaking hands warmly*). Write to me. Tell me how you are. Will you? I shall be pleased to hear.

MRS. D. If ever I come here again, will you receive me?

LADY E. (*after a pause*). If you call, I shall be at home.

MRS. D. God bless you! Now Sir Daniel you shall see me outside the palings—no further.

(SIR DANIEL *picks up his summer hat which is lying on chair at back.*)

MRS. D. I shall see my child to-morrow.

(*Exit at window followed by* SIR DANIEL. LADY EASTNEY *goes up to window. Enter* LAL *at door looking very much quieter but rather bewildered as if under the influence of a sleeping draught.*)

LAL. Well?

LADY E. How tired you look!

(*Takes him to sofa.*)

LAL. Well? (*Sits on sofa.*) I shall get over this you know.

LADY E. I'm sure you will.

LAL. Father is right. I shall go out to Sir Robert and get on with this railway——and then I——

(*He shows symptoms of sleepiness.* LADY EASTNEY *watches him a moment and then goes to window. He lies on sofa, a distant church clock chimes, and strikes eleven.* SIR DANIEL *re-enters at window, and they come to* LAL. *They stand watching him.*)

SIR D. We'll take him off to Egypt—you'll come and bring Janet?

LADY E. (*nods*). It's getting late. Where is Janet? (*Calls indoors.*) Janet! Janet! Janet! I suppose she has gone, poor child. Will you take me home?

SIR D. Say that in a little while I shall not have to take you home.

LADY E. I think I could feel at home with you.

SIR D. Say that you *are* at home now.

LADY E. (*Takes his arm.*) I am at home now.

(SIR DANIEL *turns off the electric light. Exeunt at window. A little pause.* JANET *enters at door, comes up to* LAL *who is lying on the sofa in the moonlight; she looks at him, bends over him and kisses him.* CURTAIN *falls as she goes off at window.*)

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